

An Analogy Between Wisdom and Dead Foliage

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Authorization to Submit Thesis

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Abstract

This thesis describes the intention and development of the thesis exhibition body of work by Theresa Rushing for the fulfillment of her Master of Fine Arts Degree. Her drawings are each a small installment describing facets of wisdom as presented in the Bible, using dead foliage as its physical analogy.

Wisdom, as presented in the Bible, describes generalities that bridge finite situations and also provides perspective for life in its entirety. These perspectives guide the short phrases that accompany the dead foliage renderings.

The phrases through, quote, paraphrase, or general idea connect Theresa's lived experience with her understanding of the Bible.

Through the medium of watercolor and ink, in understated and simple compositions, Theresa constructs highly detailed replicas of familiar and small pieces of foliage, accompanied by a few words.

This body of work directs the viewer towards an interpretation of wisdom as familiar, simple, and small in delivery, but complex, ancient, and encompassing once it is understood.

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Dedication

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Introduction to Wisdom and Biblical Context

The dead foliage that I use in my work provides an analogy for the general idea of wisdom as a gaining of perspective. This perspective changes the outworking of the individual and their response to events. The wisdom that I present in artwork through the phrases that accompany bits of foliage. My work is an effort to tease out how wisdom is a paradoxically, profound, and yet mundane part of everyday life. Wisdom literature is woven throughout different books and cultures in much of known history; however, the scope of my work is focused on the Biblical description and how it is related to my own experience. I sometimes quote Bible passages, combine lines or ideas from separate paragraphs as well as draw conclusions and connections to my personal experience. These conclusions carry similar ideas as passages from the Bible but are not direct quotes. I use my experience as a model to describe how these relatively ancient ideas are still potent today. Since I source my ideas from the Bible in conjunction with my own experiences, the Biblical context must be discussed as the inspiration for my definition of wisdom.

Wisdom and Biblical Context

The more well-known biblical sections on wisdom are found in the books of Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes, but references to what wisdom is and how it can be acquired are scattered throughout the Bible's entire text. As a person who believes in the Bible as the divinely inspired word of God, I take what the Bible says as a timeless truth, and applicable to life today.

The book of Proverbs is perhaps the most straightforward illustration of wisdom. It lays out guidelines for how to live life wisely. Part of Proverbs is composed of summary statements like "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall¹." and "Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body²." Although many of the short statements are if-then statements, they are, for the most part, all generalities, and do not inform the reader comprehensively about every situation and exception. For example, the proverb "Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body³" illuminates to the reader the effect of gracious words on the listener. However, there is no expansion or elaboration on the hearer's general disposition or the understanding of the speaker.

Even though this is generally true, there are numerous exceptions. Perhaps the hearer is so angry and wounded, and they cannot believe that someone would be gracious to them, in which case they feel the speaker to only be mocking or speaking

¹ ESV, Prv 16:18

² ESV, Prv 16:24

³ ESV, Prv 16:24

sarcastically. In this way, there is a disconnect between the speaker's intention and the hearer's understanding of that intention. The words are gracious but are not received in the way that they were intended making the statement seem untrue. In this way, the specific nuances or "exceptions" are not elaborated upon. Still, the general concept of the wisdom words can be understood even without all the innumerable specificities to clear up "exactly" what the author meant. This type of wisdom, although, generalized remains relevant and accurate guidance.

The direction given within Proverbs is further bolstered by the books of Job and Ecclesiastes that address exceptions that occur within some of the Proverbs generalities, further revealing the complexity and unpredictability of life. The final perspective gained from a deep reading of all three of these books and the Bible as a whole is that life is worth living in a way that adheres to the principles of wisdom despite the possibly unjust exceptions that may and often do occur.

Job, the most severe example, is about an extraordinarily rich and prosperous man who suddenly has all the worst worldly maladies inflicted upon him. This happens despite his reputation as wise, in the sight of both God and man¹. Throughout these catastrophic events, however, Job remains blameless and, in the end, is blessed for it. In Sage Journal, Achenbaum and Orwoll wrote an article² that delves into the different psychological effects on Job. They describe how his reaction and his gained understanding of his role in the universe are fulfillments of their model of gained wisdom. Through a model of wisdom assembled by the two, they conclude by

¹ ESV, Job 1:1, 1:8

² Becoming Wise: A Psycho-Gerontological Interpretation of the Book of Job

describing how wisdom impacts the individual as well as how that individual interacts with others and the world around them¹. Job, at the outset of the catastrophic turn of events, does not curse God. However, he does begin to question why God is causing these events to happen to him. These questions culminate in a response from God. God's response is more of a summons for Job, asking him numerous questions that Job, let alone humanity as a unit, could not answer. "Will you even put me in the wrong? Will you condemn me that you may be right?"² God continues to ask Job questions that only God could answer, pointing out what may have been Job's motivation.

Although God's response does not answer Job's question directly, it provides Job with the right perspective and an understanding of his initial audacity. His audacity to use his blamelessness and good deeds as an entitlement for asking his questions: "Oh, that I had one to hear me (Here is my signature! Let the Almighty answer me!) Oh, that I had the indictment written by my adversary³." His question reveals his perspective prior to God's response, namely that every event that occurred to him was a result of Job's good or bad behavior. As a result of this belief, since he was blameless, he thought the events that occurred to him were undeserved. By the end of God's dialogue with Job, he no longer sustains this belief, rather stating, "Behold, I am of small account; what shall I answer you? I lay my hand on my mouth. I have spoken once, and I will not answer; twice, but I will proceed no further⁴"

¹ Achenbaum and Orwoll 1991

² ESV, Job 40:8

³ ESV, Job 31:35

⁴ ESV Job 40:3-5

acknowledging his relation to God and his place within the whole universe as small with no value that had not been given him by another, namely God. Job's value then in contributing to the definition of wisdom, is to display the scale of perspective necessary for dealing with incredibly difficult life events.

The book of Ecclesiastes adds further context to inform this perspective. Ecclesiastes, which, through poetic means, describes how there is a season for everything. The larger scope of the book describes the life pursuits and findings of the author. The book's author, though never cited within the text, often referred to with the Hebrew word that is used; "Qohelet," meaning someone who gathers people together, a type of shepherd or teacher. It is worth noting that the author's pursuits and viewpoint are generally bereft of the divine¹. F.F. Bruce describes in his article on Ecclesiastes how this book has caused no small squabble over its place within the canon of scripture. This speculative gaze is largely due to the lack of its focus toward the divine. Instead, the entire book describes the author to be searching for life's meaning through natural means like wealth, pleasure and doing good. In the Ecclesiastes, the author indulges in amassing wealth, using his wealth for every pleasure he could conceive, becoming exceedingly knowledgeable, and doing much good, only to conclude that none of these were worth the effort. He concludes throughout the book: Why amass wealth when you will just die and perhaps leave it to someone who uses it terribly?² Why indulge in excess of pleasure when there is nothing really gained from it?³ Why

¹ Bruce 1952; Bible Project 2016

² ESV Ecc 2:18-23

³ ESV Ecc 2:5-7;

become wise when it only adds to your sorrow, when you will still die like everyone else¹? Why be good if justice is so often delayed or unfulfilled²? The conclusion of the books is to declare that even though life is unjust and wicked, people don't always get what they deserve. It is still worth living life with wisdom, but an excess of any of the aforementioned pursuits usually leads to sorrow. You may as well live a quiet life and enjoy the little things³. Although the conclusion of the author provides a solution, it still leaves much to be desired. It still nearly neglects the question of what happens after death, as Bruce goes on to describe how this "conclusion" seems to foreshadow the Biblical answer of God's plan through Christ.

Wisdom then is more of a foreshadowing for something else, a signpost that points individuals in a direction, providing the benefits of its fruit even before the destination. Wisdom, as described by the author of Ecclesiastes, is not useful for becoming the sole goal of one's life. However, wisdom is still helpful for providing the interactional basis to lead life informed of the patterns at play.

In the same vein, my work is not meant to answer the human call for a purpose; rather, it is meant to be a guide and a signpost to aid the viewer in understanding the guidelines and patterns that hold true in life. Through my work, I intend to create these little signpost-like phrases that may eventually end in questions of ultimate purpose, but the ideas I intend to display are the day to day, structures or truths to the systems in life.

¹ ESV Ecc 1:13-18; 2:12-17; 9:13-16

² ESV Ecc 8:10-13

³ Bruce 1952; ESV Ecc

By examining the experiences of the writer as a “teacher,” Ecclesiastes expounds on wealth, skill, and pleasure, as inconsequential and useless end goals for life in contrast to much of today’s cultural drive.

I want to continue to reiterate the value of this ancient wisdom defined in the Bible and that despite its age, it remains contemporary and pertinent to our lives today. The coronavirus outbreaks, an event many are dealing with, retain many aspects that this wisdom still applies to. Despite the dramatic outward shifts in human interaction during the numerous “stay-at-home” orders, the underlying structure of these interactions as they relate to wisdom has not changed. There has been an increase in individual isolation, but this is not necessarily developing more moments of peaceful reflection, as some might have hoped. Instead, individuals are often driven to continue as many of their routine tasks as possible or to becoming stuck in listless boredom while in their isolation. My artwork is not offering the solution to the chaos around, rather opening the door to insight with a visually peaceful reprieve for contemplation. My artwork instead is an appeal to the viewer to give of their time so that they can reap the reward of the fullness of that time spent pondering the structures that hold together the millennia by their reason and accuracy. My work asks the viewer to clear space in their mind to honestly ponder what results are incurred from things like harsh words or a steadfast friend.

This kind of thought is described in Derek Kinder’s book, *The Wisdom of Proverbs, Job, & Ecclesiastes*. To introduce wisdom, Kinder describes how unlike the law, that simply tells us what to do, and unlike the prophets, that tell us what God declares, wisdom urges, “think hard as well as humbly; to keep our eyes open, to use our

conscience and our common sense, and not to shrink the most disturbing questions¹.” Wisdom then requires thought and pondering in order to gain anything from it. This kind of meditation and openness of mind does not go unanswered though often delayed. Even the author of Ecclesiastes admits the value of wisdom² even with the perspective that “death cancels every human achievement, Qohelet [the author of the Ecclesiastes then] concludes that life has no meaning.” Crenshaw’s book *Ecclesiastes: A Commentary*. There is a reality beyond this physical world that governs the structures that the author of Ecclesiastes did not find, and when questions are set to it, even if they are “life’s most disturbing questions...[painful to ask and] left unanswered³” regardless of how they may be difficult or painful to ask, although the answers may not be what was anticipated. Much like in the case of Job addressing God, and God replied contrary to Job’s expectation.

At the end of Ecclesiastes, the book writing tone shifts to a different voice that reflects on the words of the preacher⁴. This voice, first describing the work of this preacher, stats that the best thing to do is to fear God and to keep his commands—indeed, this is described as “the whole duty of humankind⁵.” It then goes on to talk about a future judgment, in which everyone will receive ultimate justice for everything they have done despite the injustices that happen in this life⁶. This is the future hope that gives a connective perspective to all of life’s confusing and discouraging injustices. Wisdom

¹ Kinder 1985

² Crenshaw 1987 pg. 25

³ Crenshaw 1987

⁴ Bible Project 2016

⁵ ESV, Ecc 12:13-14

⁶ ESV, Ecc 12:13-14

can be gained without this perspective as the preacher in Ecclesiastes displays, but the perspective is that life is meaningless¹. These books provide guidance for the way that individuals operate our everyday tasks, and how they chose a career and seen through the lens of Ecclesiastes does not always lead to hope in God through the alternative may be cynicism². Although I only gave overviews of Job, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes wisdom is woven throughout the Bible³.

The Big Picture

The Bible, although an ancient document, is not unconnected to modern-day life. Instead, it is as modern as the individual who uses it. To clarify, I merely mean wisdom may be applied in a vast array of modern contexts. Although not every phrase that I imbed in my artwork is a direct quotation or paraphrase from the Bible, this entire body of work revolves around the biblical wisdom literature and my effort to contextualize the content within current everyday interactions.

For example, my piece “To voice something is a vulnerable thing,” shown in Figure 1.1, is not only a statement of a specific type of human interaction but, a statement with a greater perspective hinting at the value of vulnerability. This phrase does not discuss when this vulnerability is beneficial or detrimental, but only that it can be hard for the speaker. The biblical statement, “Even fools are thought wise if they keep silent, and discerning if they hold their tongues⁴,” provides a similar concept but

¹ ESV, Ecc 12:8

² Crenshaw 1987 pg.26

³ Kinder 1985 pg. 11

⁴ ESV, Prv 17:18

is a more specific application of that idea. The phrase in Figure 1.1 stems from the struggle of stating something that someone may already know, just as the passage in Proverbs establishes that the speech of someone may indicate their intelligence. Both statements point out the underlying exposing nature of speech. Although almost always I shift the wording and narrative style, my desire is not to change the content or results that following the Biblical ideas can provide. My intent is to develop the context and wording in conjunction with my own experience that provides a more practical day to day relatability.

I sometimes develop this relatability by using direct quotes of scripture in conjunction with a phrase or thought from my first-hand experience. In my own work, as shown in Figure 1.2. I nearly quoted the first half of a verse in my phrase, “a Kind answer turns away wrath,” which is nearly identical to the first half of “a gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs it up¹.” But in my artwork, the near-quote is preceded with “O, to be loved while being ugly—shown grace while you are a jerk.” Although the first half of my phrase is neither a paraphrase nor a direct quotation of the text from Proverbs, it provides the context in which I experienced the idea presented in the Proverb. In this way, I present a situation that illustrates a firsthand experience of the Proverb’s validity.

In other instances, I connect ideas from separate passages. In Figure 1.3 and the close-up, Figure 1.4, the text, “If you walk away words still bite at your heels,” is not a direct quote, nor is it a paraphrase from any wisdom literature that I am familiar

¹ ESV, Prv, 15:1

with. Rather, it is a combination of two separate verses: “Stone is heavy, and sand is a burden; but a fool’s provocation is heavier than both¹” and, “Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you yourself will be just like him. Answer a fool according to his folly, or he will be wise in his own eyes².” Both describe provocation as presenting two options, both with bad results and with no obvious, beneficial way out. These passages, in conjunction with my own experience, provided the inspiration for the artwork shown in Figure 1.3. This inspiration is propelled by the seemingly simple concepts that wisdom presents.

Wisdom, though sometimes simple in description, is frequently not intuitive or easily understood. Because of this quality, the phrases that I use to depict wisdom often require unpacking. Figures 1.7 and 1.8 depict the idea that “a best effort rejected can fill one with doubt, but the same received well proves a double reward.” In other words, difficulties can arise in tasks, and this difficulty can arise as a result of the response to the finished task, not simply the task itself. The reward mentioned is not a physical reward. Instead, the described reward is the satisfaction and confidence an individual receives when their work is appreciated.

In figure 1.5 and the details in figure 1.6, I use a comparison of the nuances inherent within thought: “Just because you think something doesn’t mean it defines you, what you dwell on will shape you.” Although this pair of ideas may seem superficially

¹ ESV, Prv 27:3

² ESV, Prv 26:5-6

contradictory, they work together to illustrate how a different quantity of the very same thought can have dramatically different results.

This difference lies in a matter of choice, as well as the concept that an individual will become more like what they mediate on. This freedom of choice is accurately described in the forward to Pattakos's book, as the most "exhilarating, thrilling, and motivating idea that people have ever really seriously contemplated." The emphasis on choice is further pointed out in the "Core Principles" as the first of seven that the book explains. "Exercise the freedom to choose your attitude¹." This kind of choice highlights what individuals can choose regardless of the situation. The ability to self-actualize or visualize something into the physical world merely through the exercise of thought is not what these phrases are directed toward. Instead, the idea of choice and will to focus oneself upon a goal are present without the belief that thought, and meditation have the ability to manifest in the physical world. In fact, Victor Frankl, the psychiatrist who's teaching the book "The Prison of Our Thoughts," is meant to apply, declared during his last television interview that "Self-Actualization is Nonsense². The artwork and phrases in figures 1.5 and 1.6 are meant to describe the power that individuals have over their thoughts to choose what to linger on, as well as how, when thought is pursued, that thought has the power within the individual.

¹ Pattakos 2004 pg. vi

² Neotic Films 2019

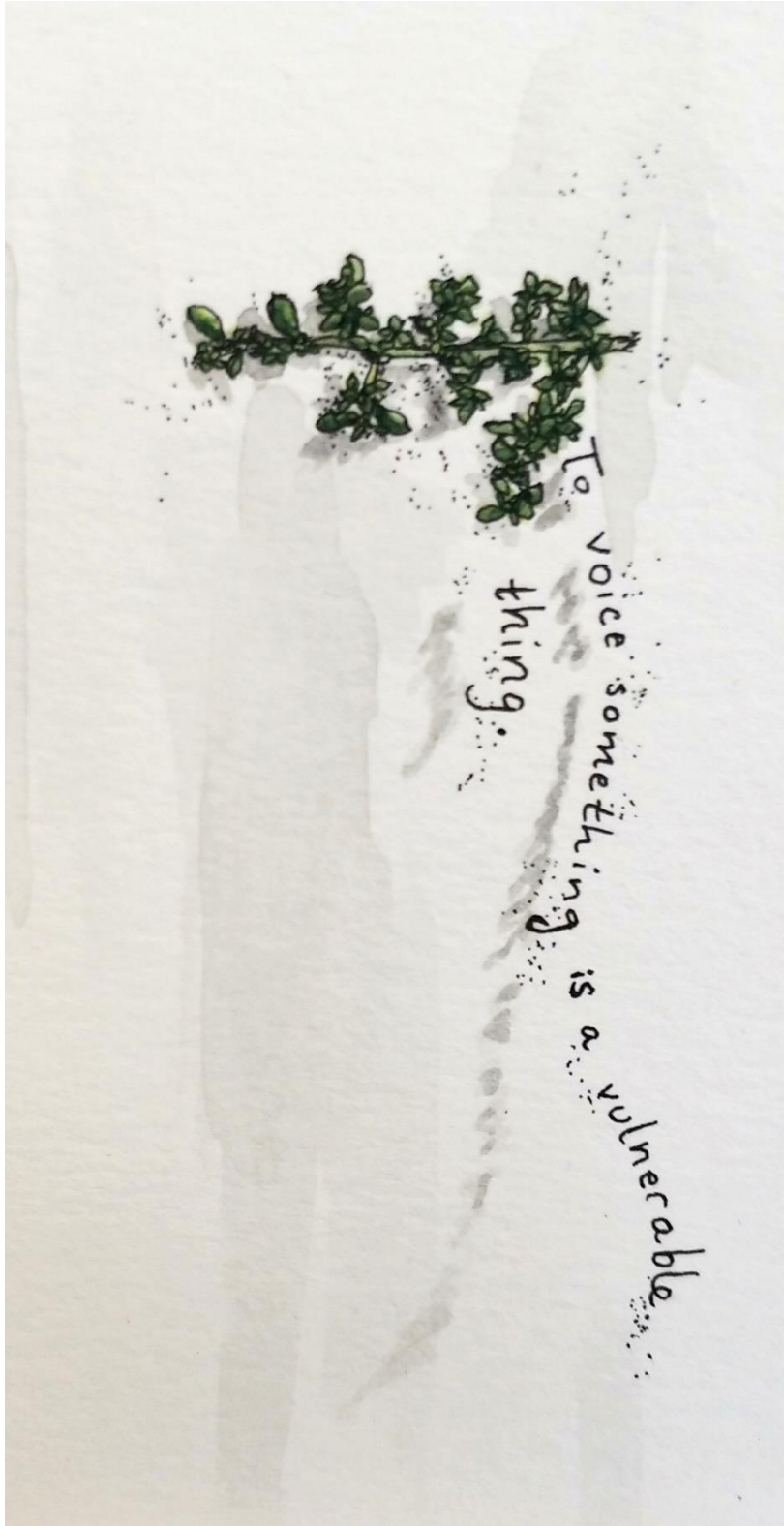


Figure 1.1 "To voice something is a vulnerable thing."



Figure 1.2 "O, to be loved while being ugly—shown grace while being a jerk. a kind answer turns away wrath."

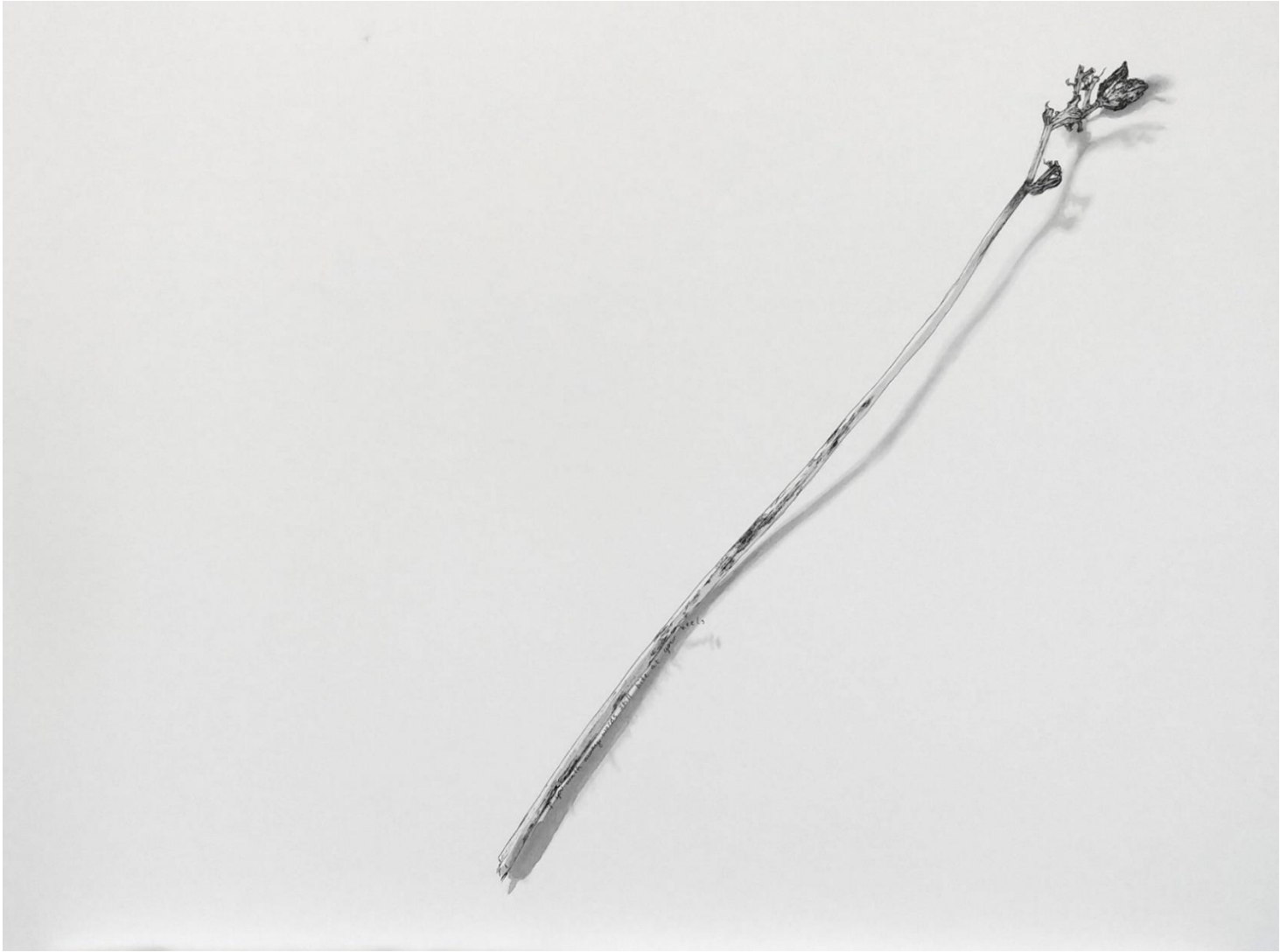


Figure 1.3 “If you walk away words still bite at your heels”

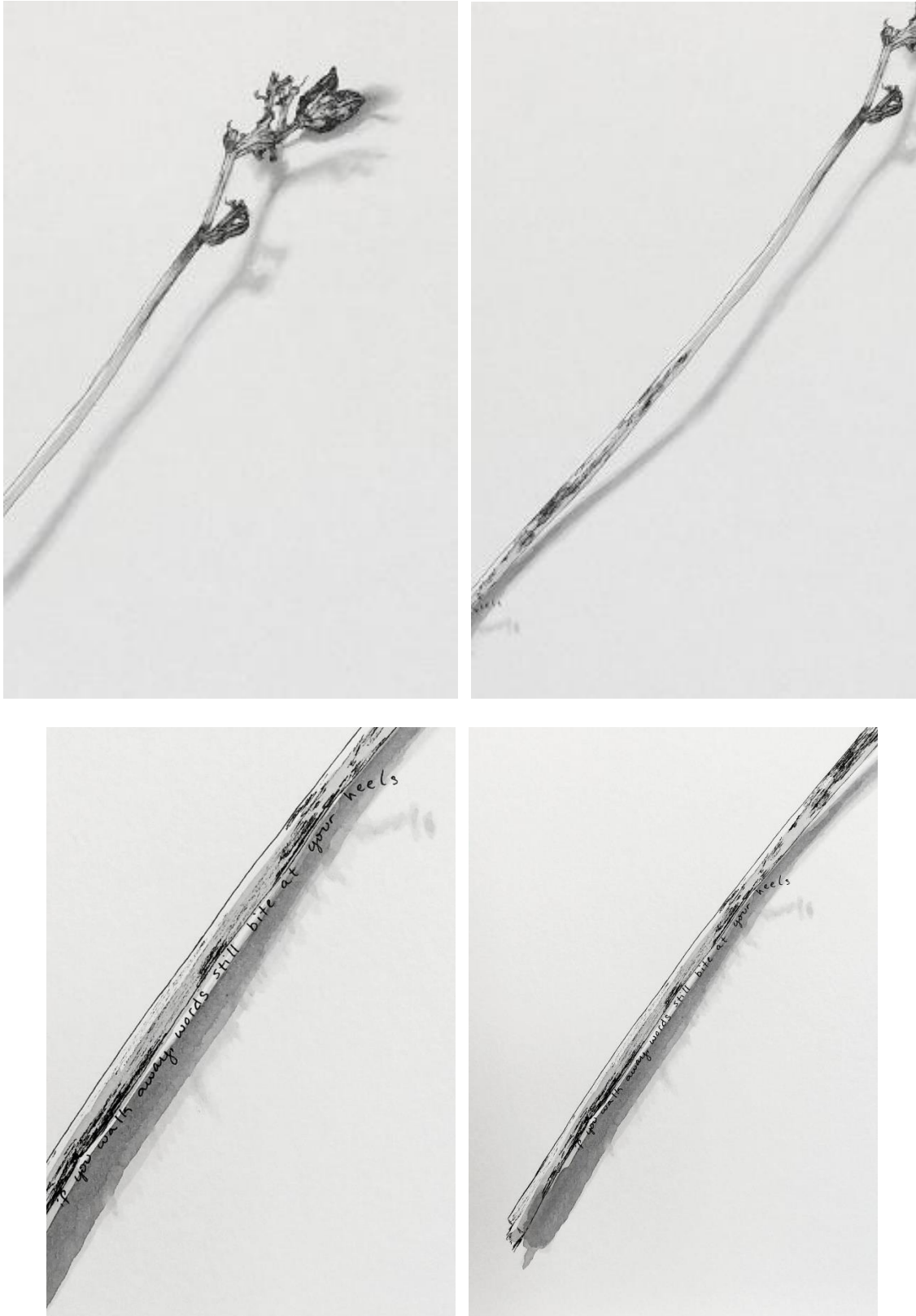


Figure 1.4 Details "If you..."



Figure 1.5 “Just because you think something doesn’t mean it defines you, what you dwell on will shape you”



Figure 1.6 Details “Just because...”



Figure 1.7 “a best effort rejected can fill one with doubt, but the same received well proves a double reward.”



Figure 1.8 Details "A best effort..."

Systems of Knowing

The phrases that I use to describe wisdom are simultaneously *ancient*, in that I use the Biblical text for reference, *current*, in that they apply to my experience, and *pertinent*, in that they represent reliable and useful information for life. I am arguing that wisdom, as I have defined, it is pertinent through a discussion of some of the main systems that individuals ascribe to being able to know something. I will briefly discuss the scientific method as a means of learning the reliability of a phenomenon, culture, and the growth of ideas as an appeal to some common values as well as my understanding of wisdom as an ordering system for relational interactions.

Scientific evidence describes objectively gathered information that can be consistently reproduced by others. For this reason, because science is intended to consist of reproducible results, we trust that in applying similar mechanisms, we will achieve similar results. Laws like this that govern subjects like biology, physics, and math are reproducible. Similarly, I understand wisdom to play a structural role in human interaction, much like the sciences provide a structural understanding of things like biology, math, and physics. The structure of wisdom goes beyond merely adding knowledge and parallels with the statement that Stephen Covey makes in the forward to *The Prison of Our Thoughts*. “To learn something but not to do is really not to learn. To know something but not to do is really not to know.” He then goes on to describe how an individual who was blind from birth might explain sight to another individual. He describes how reading or speaking the intellectualized

principles does not develop the kind of understanding that experience does¹. Covey's statements explore the difference between gained knowledge and applied knowledge through experience. Through my experience, I illustrate my understanding of the principles that I read within the Bible and the authority that I have through the experience and application. Unlike the blind man's lack of ability to describe what it is like to really "see," I can describe to the viewer what it is like to understand wisdom because I have understood and applied it.

This structure that wisdom provides gives stability to those who gain wisdom regardless of their religious affiliation. Although wisdom is often understood to be based on religious ideology, the character traits that it endorses or those it cautions against can sometimes be statistically or scientifically proven. Indeed, many ideas of Biblical wisdom literature would be difficult to study. For example, "A false balance is an abomination to the LORD, but a just weight is his delight²" would be beyond the scope of science since the Lord's response to false balances and just weights are impossible to measure directly. However, in other cases, the outcomes of different types of behaviors can be measured. Below are two studies, one of positive behavior and one of negative, that have been scientifically studied and recognized.

In an article published by the American Psychological Association, developed as a result of data from five different studies on various aspects of victimization and gossip, close links have been found between loneliness, depression, and anxiety as a

¹ Pattakos 2004 pg. xii

² Prv 11:1, ESV

result of gossiping¹. This sentiment lines up with the sentiment described in Proverbs 11:13: “A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy person keeps a secret².”

In another section, Proverbs explains that a “generous person will prosper” and “whoever refreshes others will be refreshed.³” A study was done on individuals who had verbally committed to spending weekly money endowments on others, as opposed to a control group that received the same allotment of money but were required to spend it on themselves revealed some substantial results that coincide with Proverbs 11:25. Researchers found that there were “significantly higher levels of generosity and happiness” in the individuals committed to giving the money as opposed to the control group⁴.

Although appealing to science may seem like a trump card, scientific findings are often preceded by cultural shifts, statements, and ideas that are frequently pursued unless they are disproven or lose favor. Many of the ideas within the umbrella of wisdom have similarly been followed but not proven. Examples of this can be seen in history, including examples of theories that have been followed, proven wrong, and then often removed as a viable theory.

With the theory that certain races of humanity are further evolved than others, Hitler convinced much of the German people that other lesser races should be annihilated. This was done in pursuit of refining and developing humanity and

¹ American Psychological Association 2006

² ESV

³ 11:25 ESV

⁴ Firestone 2010

weeding out the “bad genetics.” This theory of one race being superior to the rest was largely disposed of as more evidence revealed it to be untrue. It also fell into deep disfavor as much of the world despised Hitler’s use of it.

Despite the lack of initial evidence, the idea of superiority in the German race was not only believed but enacted by the German people as Hitler lead them to war. The cultural shift towards the idea of eugenics made Hitler’s use of it feasible and theory precede science. In contrast to the dark example of Nazi Germany, applied wisdom sheds light on the true structure at play within humanity. Scientific evidence shows the validity of many of the ideas presented within the Bible but does not have to scope to comprehensively prove all of the ideas presented within it. Many of the ideas that it presents have yet to be analyzed or studied conclusively. However, a lack of scientific proof does not remove an idea’s validity. Scientific proof merely exposes an idea’s physical and quantifiable results, and if an idea has yet to be studied, science cannot, at that point, expose it. Science then, is a means to verify or disprove an idea, only after studies have been conclusively conducted. Otherwise, culture has a large role in defining the “validity” of an idea.

Regardless of culture’s sometimes conflicting stances, there are a few characteristics in line with wisdom. These characteristics seem to be commonly held. They include values like “honesty” and “loyalty.” These values are paraded or exalted in different contexts and sometimes used to identify an individual or address a common goal.

These “valuable characteristics” might be appealed to in one-word terms like “honesty” applied on yard signs containing political candidates’ names¹ or in short slogans that describe a candidate’s platform like, “Yes we can.” These sorts of ideas and characteristics are also presented in conjunction with products to give us the idea that if a specific product, say a cell phone, is obtained, one will also obtain the ability to communicate well. However, although a cell phone has the power to transmit noises similar to the noises you provide, it cannot change your words to be more caring than they were as you spoke them into the microphone. Words or phrases may be used in cultural contexts to direct individuals to take particular types of action. These words and phrases sometimes echo wisdom but frequently do not reinforce the structure of wisdom as a whole.

This structure is outlined within Proverbs and, as mentioned above, the books of Job and Ecclesiastes both take into account the exceptions to the general structures as well as elaborating on the responses and perspectives that are most productive within life’s many exceptions.

Regardless of these distinctions, I understand wisdom literature, specifically as it is found in the Bible, to function as a sort of universal ordering system for relational interactions. I see a link between the way plants, animals, physics, and other realms of nature with wisdom. Each of these natural categories biology, or physics, has systems that are discoverable. I am asserting that there is a system that governs humans’ interactions with one another. I am asserting that it is discoverable, upon

¹ Wescott 2012

honest reflection and that this structure is largely displayed within the Bible as wisdom. My work is my effort to point out the facets of this structure that I have connected from the Bible to my own experience. The statements taken individually do not act as definites. Rather, they are meant to function as reliable guidelines for one's life.

The Right Place, Time and Space

The little plants that I pick up are the visual starting points that I use to translate my moments of reflection into a piece of artwork, which can then stimulate similar experiences in the viewer. I do this by providing the feeling of time, visual space, and developing a visual platform for wisdom to be sought out, rather than unknowingly passed by. In the following paragraphs, I describe my visual and abstract frame for time.

Time

Through simulating and referencing this time in my phrases, I give the viewer a sense of both the eternal and the temporal nature of time. The perspectives provided are afforded through an event within time. However, the perspectives and structural facets hold throughout time. If an individual were to mentally step back from their life to try and understand what structures or guidelines held things together, I would venture to say that wisdom, as I describe, affords this type of structure. Although my work is built from this structure, the resulting artwork only describes bits and pieces of its form. This structure extends uninhibited by time, although as individuals within time, we must experience wisdom as a part of time. Time becomes an element within my work through my experiences exhibited by the phrases.

The conversational nature of my phrases can enrich time spent in reflection on a specific event. These reflections are what allow me to notice and understand these underlying guidelines for myself. Figure 3.1 is an example of this conversational reference to time, “Silence is so sweet when it is the silence of rest; a silence of friends

comforted by one another's company." This phrase is a reflection on an event; whether deep in the past or still ongoing, the event is set in time. However, the reflection provides overarching guidelines that can apply to more events than this one.

By referencing the concept of time in this way, my phrasing alleviates the direct pressure that being confined by time often creates. If being outside of time were the entire goal, then I would leave out reference to time in the form of events entirely. However, sourcing reflections on my current experiences afford nuanced connections to the viewers that might otherwise be lost bereft of modern-day experience. Reading literature written today requires less effort to understand than reading literature written 100-2000 years ago because the commonly used words or activities are shifted. The analogies in an agriculturally driven city will be less meaningful in a culture developed around technology because of the culture's familiarity with the content in the analogy. Although most of my work is reflective of events in this way, a few works seemingly step outside of that framework.

One such piece, "Cheer up, it isn't tomorrow yet," as shown in Figure 3.2, is not only a reflection but a directive statement that doesn't seem as event-related. In this way, it seems to stay wedged within time, unlike the previously described phrases. "Cheer up" gives the context of an individual urging someone (within my experience, an individual in a state of anxiety) to become more cheerful. This reasoning directs the individual and the viewer to be more aware of the present because they have not yet crossed over into the future, "it isn't tomorrow yet" reminds the listener of the present as well as how they will soon cross over into the future as the new present. I

reference time with my words and phrases, but I also reference time with my compositional use of paper.

Time Space and Space

The large area of white paper, unlike the direct referencing within my phrases, references time as space. The large expanse of white paper isolates each object and provides the viewer with a visual space that affords the idea focus. There is ‘time’ within the image to view and ponder each subject. In figure 3.3 and 3.4, “Loving well requires sacrifice,” a cluster of berries looks as if it has fallen to the ground and is now laying there in a shriveled state. A photograph as large as this drawing depicting the same subject with the same spacing would likely have so much other matter strewn about that the importance of these little berries would become lost. By penning them in a blank scape of white, I give the viewer no other subject to view. Rather, I visually push away the clutter to declare, “*This* is what’s important.” It might not be in the center, but through my drawings, I am giving it a platform.

Our physical bodies need room to move and work. An illustration of this that is odd yet clear might be if someone is sealed into a block of cement. The individual could very well still be alive, but they would not be able to walk, dance, or make a pot of coffee. Hence, even if they could technically survive, because of their confinement in the cement, they would not be able to see or relate to much because of their incredibly confined state.

The idea of creating a space where one can work and move about, let alone feel like they can breathe, is what I am striving for. Blank paper space surrounding my drawn subject is the catalyst that I use for simulating the experience of physical for the

viewer to feel mobile as they view my work. In the piece depicted in Figure 2.3, there is not only enough blank paper to create a sense of time but also to create a physical space that is large enough to allow the viewer to move around visually.

Inhibitors and Mindfulness

To further expound upon the idea of making space, I want to point out that the culture of the United States circa 2020 is one that seems to take pride in a “busy” schedule. Although this has some distinct benefits, it may inhibit many individual’s abilities to reflect on life while they are living it. Unfortunately, many individuals seem to come to life’s end and realize, only then, how they lived their life. While many individuals are aware that this is a problem, those very same individuals are often also aware that they are active participants in those sorts of “busy” schedules that leave no time for reflection. My work is intended to function as a reminder, not only of the ability individuals have for reflective thought but also of the kinds of thoughts honest reflection can yield. Reflection on events to understand what drove events in a specific direction, or what principles were enacted, develop in the individual a perspective on life that, although not always entirely conclusive, is aware of their place in the universe—honest reflection functions as a type of mindfulness. As described in an article by Robert Sternberg, mindfulness should be understood as a style of thinking rather than merely an ability or a character trait. My work encourages a style of thought or “mindfulness” intended to urge the viewer to step into a reflective thought process. This type of thought process, as described by Sternberg, is developed rather than born with. Although Sternberg’s article describes

meditation with a broader brush than my description of honest reflection affords, his assessment of an individual's ability to learn or develop it is consistent.

Mindfulness can be used as a means to reflect and review past events. In this way it can be used as a tool to help an individual to gather more insight on an event than they previously noticed. In my work, I use mindfulness to re-examine events in order to see what patterns or structures ring true to me within an event. I look for ways these structures could be applied to different individuals and situations. This process has many parallels to *Grounded Theory*.

Grounded Theory, a systematic strategy for conducting qualitative research, begins with the researcher's theory. With this theory in mind, the researcher creates a research model, conducts the research and finally uses the research findings in conjunction with the theory to implement those findings in the world; however, each step is marked with careful and critical re-examining of the theory in order to make sure that it is in line with the findings and the findings actually support the theory¹.

Within my own process, I begin with a theory. This theory may have been spurred on by an event or interaction. I then go on to create a structure that could be applied to different situations. By reviewing different situations within my mind, I simulate a research study. Many of my initial theories or structures are refined or revised so they accurately represent my understanding. After I feel this research has led to conclusive and insightful results, I synthesize the findings into a thought-provoking phrase to lead the viewer to a similar conclusion.

¹ Birks and Mills 2011

Through my process, I use meditation as a tool to reflect and research an event, as a method of verifying and testing an idea or event to see what insights can be gathered. My work is the result of goal-oriented reflection, a search for wisdom.

Hide and Seek

Because wisdom is worth looking for and hard to find, I use text to simulate a visual scavenger hunt of sorts, hinting at that greater need to search for wisdom. Like noticing a trail of ants, a single word within an image is easily found, whereas the rest of the phrase may require closer inspection before it is entirely legible. Finding ants might go something like this: At first, you might notice a crumb on the floor with little hints of movement. As you lean in to understand what you see, you realize the slight bit of movement you noticed was an ant, but after a little bit of watching, you can see a whole string of ants traveling to and from the crumb to a little crack in the floorboards.

In Figure 3.5, the first word that catches the viewer's attention, "but," beckons the viewer to come closer, to inspect the crumb as it were. Although the other bits of text are smaller and hidden within the shadow of the piece of drawn grass, the entire phrase readily becomes apparent. "Go home, but I don't know where that is." This generates a sort of visual hide and seek.

By inviting the viewer to go through the visual effort to find the words within the dead foliage, I establish the parallel between the viewer's effort to find my written phrase just as I searched for the insight that the words present.

Like I invite the viewer into my search for this insight, by using handwriting, I invite them to think within the context of their humanity. Text is generally used to indicate an item or an idea, but the style of lettering also adds a layer of subtle meaning that might otherwise have been overlooked or left out completely. When handwritten, the script carries a tactility that is home to the hand that created it. Each individually formed letter refers to the individuals' hand that did the writing. In this way, the handwritten text has more of a connection to its creator than printed text. Because wisdom is a distinctly human trait, rather than formulated or enacted through a machine, I thought it appropriate that the platform I gave wisdom, should have as close a link to humanity as I could conjure.

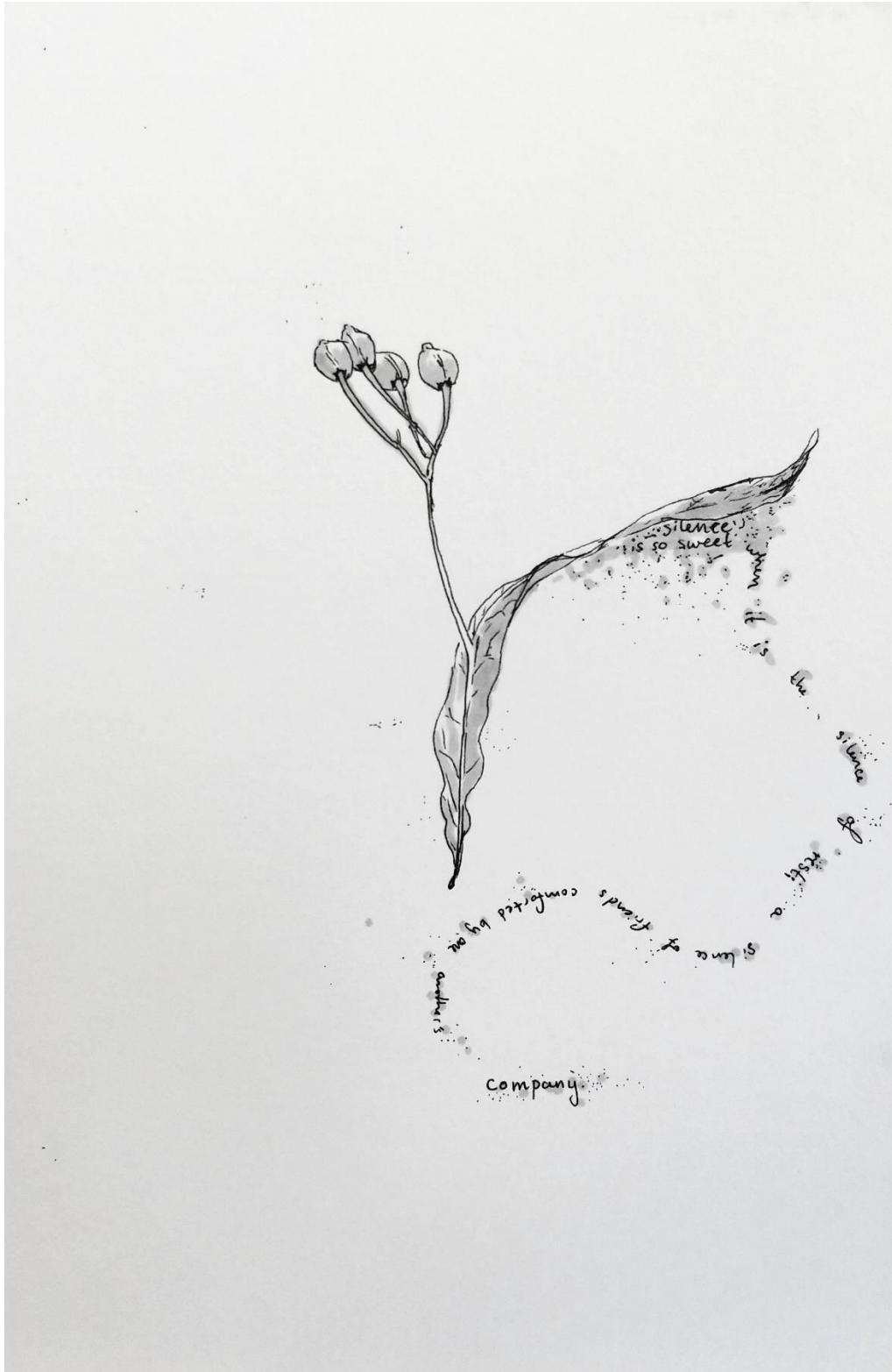


Figure 3.1 "silence is so sweet when it is the silence of rest; a silence of friends comforted by one another's company."

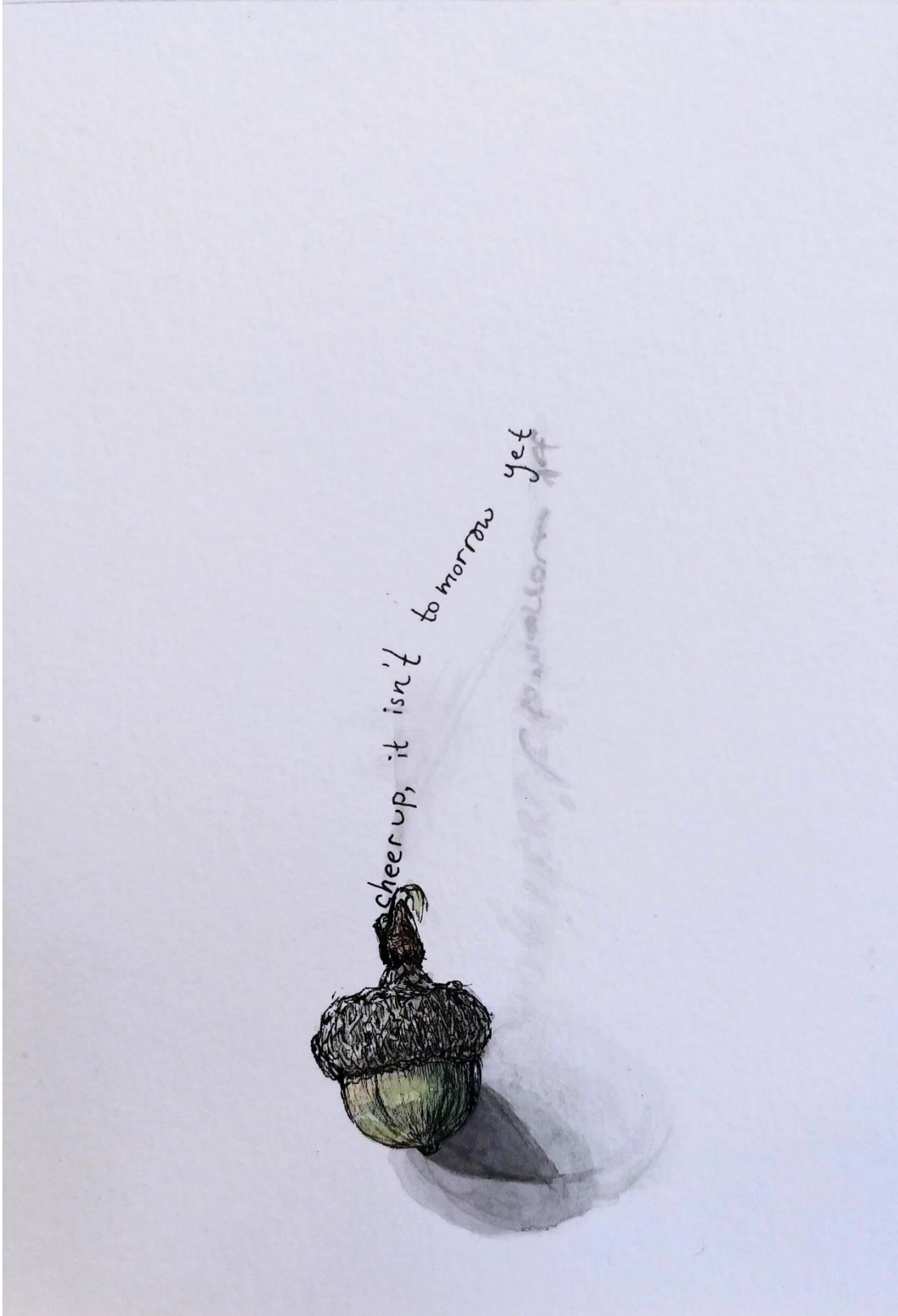


Figure 3.2 "cheer up, it isn't tomorrow yet"



Figure 3.3 "Loving well requires sacrifice"

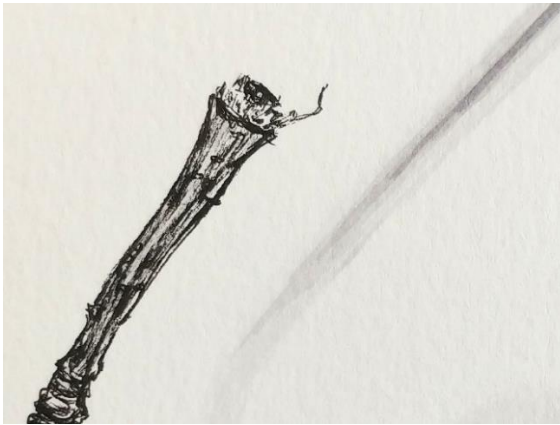


Figure 3.4 Details "Loving well..."

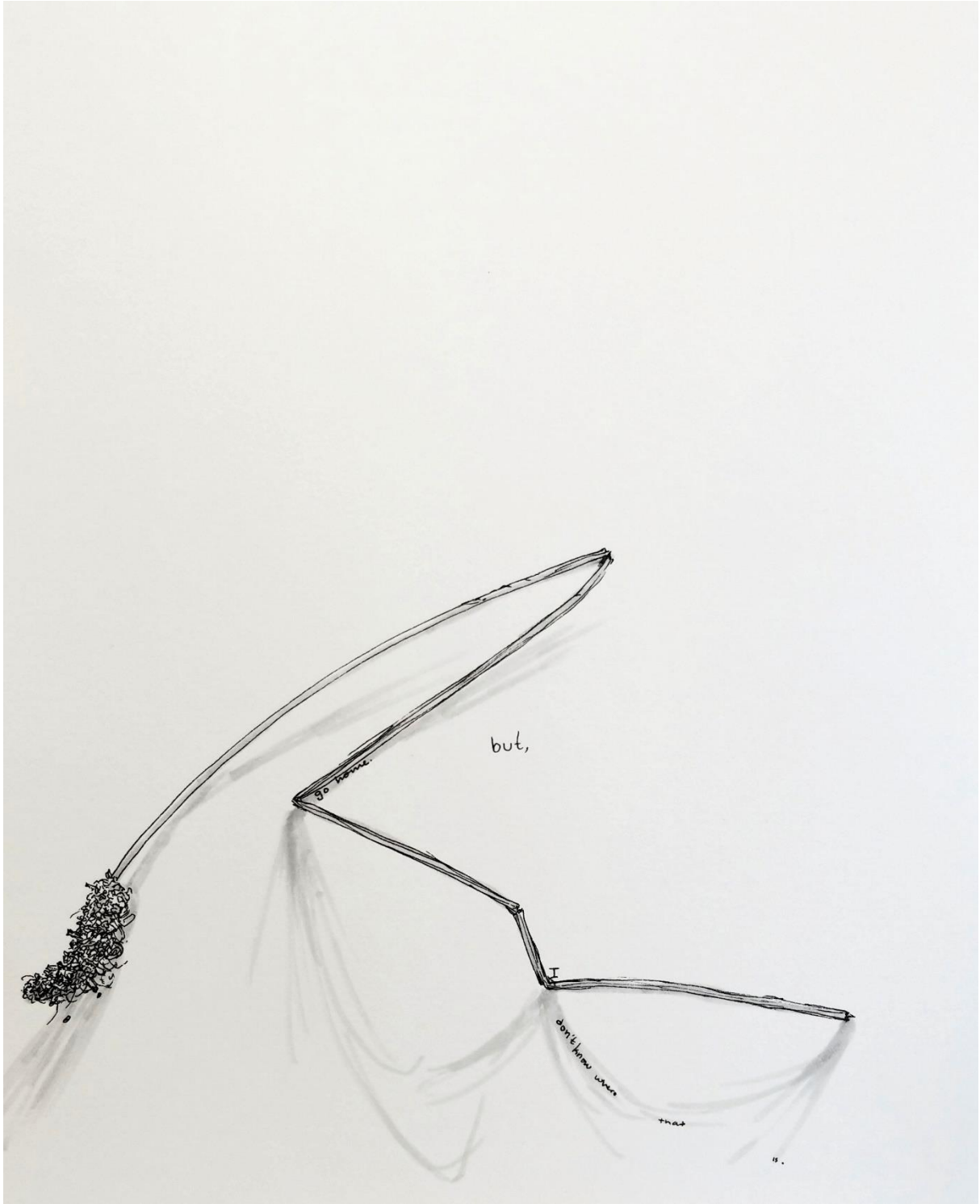


Figure 3.5 “go home, but, I don’t know where that is”

Dead Foliage

Just as the handwritten text is a closer link to humanity than typeset text, I draw the plants at their most frail when they seem to be mostly dead, with only a few remnants of life left. The similarity I am drawing between wisdom and dead foliage is about their often overlooked and intricate nature. The dead seedpods of plants and the principles of wisdom are often visually nothing like the fully grown plant or character trait. Wisdom also holds a striking resemblance to dead foliage in that it reminds us both of the past and future.

Analogy

The dead foliage in this body of work serves as an analogy of wisdom. In the springtime, plants are full of life's vibrancy and beauty. In the spring, everyone notices and enjoys them. However, once the leaves are no longer new and the flowers have exchanged their color and fullness for grays, browns, and thin, brittle husks, much of their delicacy and intricacy go unnoticed and often unappreciated.

Wealth and pleasure have dramatic methods of getting our attention. Wisdom, although it provides a path for how to use both wealth and pleasure, is not presented in our culture as a full and vibrant concept. Instead, wisdom is often considered "outdated" or that by adhering to it, and individuals may not be able to become knowledgeable in current theories or ideas, isolating themselves from the past.

Although wisdom literature, as presented in the Bible, is incredibly old, it has a value similar to that of the shriveled plants in the fall; the ability to germinate life. “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit¹.” This Biblical passage pinpoints the unique quality of seeds as they can multiply in abundance only in keeping with the sequencing of death, giving way to life. In the same way, any idea of wisdom is dead until the individual applies it to their life.

The plant matter depicted in Figure 1.7 and 1.8 is the seed pods of a lilac bush. Although many people know what a lilac bush looks like and smells like in the spring, unless a person pays attention to lilac in its dried out dead season, they may be unable to distinguish the plant from another shrub or know what type of plant the seeds will produce. This would be especially true if someone were to hand them a few seeds bereft of their context. Although seed pods are beautiful in a way, they are often unlike the flower or the rest of the plant from which they come. It is usually quite difficult to envision the entire plant simply by looking at the seed. However, the appearance of a seed calls to mind the reality that the seed came from a plant and still contains the potential to make another of its kind.

In an interview, Sophie Munns, an artist that uses seeds as a platform to talk about crop diversity, describes how seeds provide a lens for pondering the present as well as the past and the future². This envisioning, without concrete knowledge of what type of seed it is or what the plant in question looks like, will most likely not result

¹ ESV Jn 12:24

² Crop Trust 2014; Sethi 2016; Munns n.d.

in a visualization of the correct plant but the idea of a plant to come and a plant that the seed came from. Her work, like mine, uses seeds to discuss nature's cycle. More specifically, both Munns and my work elaborate on how seeds, although in a distinctly dead state, have the unique disposition to develop life.

Wisdom, like seed pods from a plant, is an aspect of life that needs constant cultivation to grow into what it is meant to be. Even though a wise phrase or sentiment may not be fun or exciting, the principles and perspectives that it provides represent the seeds of a fully developed life.

The foliage at a stage when it is dead, shriveled, and hard, also ties into the Biblical perspective of an imperfect world: just as there are human injustices, there are natural injustices as well. Plants and animals die, sometimes in horrific ways. Nature itself does things that destroy and break-apart other pieces of itself contrary to its original state. Even though there are ways that seem to redeem and make use of these otherwise terrible events, the fact that this redemption needs happen at all illustrates the broken imperfection of the world.

The Biblical perspective does not, however, let death, brokenness, and imperfection leave its followers depressed. Just as redemptive beauty is seen in nature, as dead seeds and plants become alive again with the coming of spring, nature also makes obvious the vibrant life that comes, ironically, out of death.

I intend to present seeds, both tactile in the plants themselves and allegorically for wisdom. The seeds of wisdom have the potential to grow into character traits and worldview perspectives through the analogy that brings them together. Bereft of

the understanding that seeds, though dead, can bring life once planted, or that wisdom once acted on can bring about better character, this art will not speak.

Botanical Art

The plant life in my work warrants a discussion of Botanical Art. Botanical Art, though sometimes a broad and generously encompassing genre, is typically defined as artwork that depicts a specific plant—which my work does. However, my work does not entirely fit within this genre, as various botanical societies define it.

For example, Botanical Artists of Canada defines botanical art as art with a goal: depicting plants either whole or in pieces, to display the plant in a way that is both visual and scientific¹. The society of Botanical Art and Artists website likewise describes it as a true and lifelike illustration of a plant as well as work that highlights distinguishing features to help the viewer discern the type of plant that has been illustrated². These definitions reveal where my work departs from the botanical art genre. Although my work is highly accurate to the specimen in question, the specimen or plant scrap that I use is not always useful for finding out the species of plant.

Rix argues in his book³ that although both botanical illustration and botanical art may exhibit plant life, the goal of the former is to merely be enjoyed, whereas the

¹ Botanical Artists of Canada n.d.

² Botanical Art and Artists 2011

³ Rix 2012

goal of the latter is to inform the viewer about the species from which the plant is derived.

Each piece of my thesis, although presented as a series of individual installments that gain context from the whole body of work, is also intended to be enjoyed on its own. In this way, my work is similar to and departs from botanical illustration, as described by Rix.

Further, although my illustrations do visually situate individual plants on a plain background with accompanying text, I do not provide the quality and character of content sought after in botanical art.

As I have demonstrated throughout this document, the foliage I have drawn is lifelike and illusionistic. However, many of the plant parts which I have portrayed are not easily discernible as to their species. I have not been able to identify some of the plants since the specimens that I used did not always display sufficient identifying characteristics for me to determine their species.

The text found in botanical artwork is used for clarification to identify the plant, its characteristics, and its life cycle. In contrast, the text in my artwork nearly subverts that end through content and readability. The textual content is not directly related to the plant or the plant's life cycle. The connection is metaphorical rather than descriptive of the plant's qualities. Therefore, my content—especially regarding plant identification—is incomplete. Even regarding wisdom as a whole, my text is incomplete. Only a phrase to hint at an event or a short statement of epiphany, as opposed to a fleshed-out description, are on display.

My work references the Bible by highlighting a single phrase or idea within the greater idea of wisdom. I would describe my work as analogous to taking isolated quotes out of a book brimming with ideas to gather a taste. In contrast, botanical art would be more like attempting to summarize the essence of the entire book.

Unlike botanical art, my body of work does not represent plants to give a comprehensive or scientific perspective on each plant. Instead, the goal of this work is to visually describe a little bit of the beauty and details of a specific plant at a point when the plant is often deemed least beautiful and least recognizable.

Although visually similar, the goal of my work is antithetical to botanical art.

Botanical art aims to develop a comprehensive visualization of a plant in all its various stages. My work aims to be visually true to the singular moment in which I draw the plant, not the entirety of its life cycle.

Familiarity

Since the plants used within these images are local to the vicinity in which I exhibit them, they may be familiar to the viewers, though perhaps not by name or precise specification. This aspect of locality arises because although there are plants across the world that are interesting to draw and would lend themselves to my compositions, I do not go out of my way to gather them for this body of work. I want the viewer to feel as if they could have just as easily gone for a short walk and found a plant scrap just like the pieces illustrated in my work. Similarly, I want my work to be a window for the viewer to experience the plant and phrase, not a display of my life or ego as my own but that they might be transported through their own experience of the work.

This concept is found in the work of nature poet, Mary Oliver. Her work is described in an article by Sara Todd. Todd expounds on the relationship of the reader to nature through Oliver's experience. Oliver uses "I" not as a stand-in for her place in her work, rather she uses it as a catalyst for the viewer to enter the work. Her goal is not merely to define her experiences, but to reveal them as events that could occur to anyone. The poems as she writes them are created as a result of her experience but are windows for the reader to experiences those vary events¹

I intend for my work to become these windows. I intend it to feel relatable, not only through the familiarity of the plant but also in the way that I write my phrases. My phrases read as if their insights arose from ordinary life. The plants I chose, reflect this ordinary life, by reflecting the region where I live and being exhibited to individuals in that same region. Through the commonality of plant life from a region, I hope to cultivate another layer of familiarity and the sense that finding or thinking these thoughts could happen to anyone.

¹ Todd 2019

My Visual Language and Process

Although much of the reasoning and underlying purposes in this body of work have been discussed, there are a few nuances that are lost without a walk-through of my process. This section is an effort to describe the facets of my creative process fully.

I frequently walk as a means of transportation, and when I do, I reflect on life. Specifically, I ponder the “how” and “why” behind my interactions with others. I ponder the structures at play relationally that would hold, regardless of the individuals in question. When I ponder things in this way, I am often able to glean some sort of insight. These insights are often spring boarded by a connection between my experience and a passage or perspective presented in the Bible.

In the event of these insights, there is usually a “Wow, that is how it works!” moment. This inner delight in understanding is reliably followed by an outward appreciation of the patterns and insights that are available in nature as well. With this delighted outlook, I notice the foliage nearby and am often struck by the structures that hold it together as well, taking a part of the plant as a physical reminder of the entire experience the foliage is both a symbol of location and also a marker for the moments of insight.

I go on to carry this little bit of nature’s narrative and think about the insight I just gleaned. At this point, I still have no concise phrase to convey the insight, so I continue to ruminate on how I can distill the understanding into a concise phrase.

Since all of this has happened in-transit, the whole process is often put on hold until I have time to be in the studio. Once there, I pull out the written notes of my thought as well as the plant piece. This plant scrap, which is merely an echo of the whole plant, relates to the distilled phrase, which is merely an echo of my entire thought process that encompasses the pondered situation.

By using the word distill, I do not mean that I condense the entire interaction, rather that I strip away the outer layers to find the defining structures beneath. With the two echoes, plant, and phrase, I set about situating the plant scrap on the page in a way that gives the viewer the sense that there is more. There is more than the little snippet of a situational interaction and more than the little scrap of foliage.

After I have decided upon the composition, I weave the phrase and foliage together, but to do this, I must make them harmonize with each other. I do this by taking out most, if not all, the color from the plant and drawing it two-dimensionally. I then give the phrase a shadow, in the same way that the plant has a shadow. These artistic treatments of the separate realms of thoughts and objects, bring them visually to the same realm so that they can be combined, making them both illusionary objects so that the allegory that joins them can come to life. Since I cannot fabricate life itself, I can only give it the partial life that art affords.

Once the creation of these pieces is complete, I offer them to viewers in a spacious place that a gallery setting often presents. Galleries are a place for people to take a little bit of a pause and look at the artwork. Although it is common to have thesis exhibition work shown in a gallery setting, I believe it to be a fitting place for this

body of work for those very reasons. My work highlights the need to take time to pause and reflect. In a gallery setting, people seem more at ease to do just that. My work is meant for the viewer to ponder and discover for themselves the structures and intricacies in both plants and human interaction. The bits and pieces of wisdom that I present don't function until they are taken and experienced by the viewer.

In Ardelt's reply to commentaries on her initial article, Empirical Assessment of a Three-Dimensional Wisdom Scale, she gives a brief statement on wisdom, and the interplay of learning and application that occur.

I suggest that wisdom-related knowledge has to be realized by an individual through a reflection on personal experiences to be called wisdom and that the wisdom-related knowledge that is written down in texts remains theoretical or intellectual knowledge until a person re-transforms it into wisdom. From this perspective, wisdom is a characteristic of people and not of texts.

Ardelt's description highlights the necessity of wisdom to be applied rather than simply existing as text like knowledge¹. Because of this need for wisdom to be written in life for it to be more than theoretical, I use my own life experience to relate these theories to the viewer so that they might become more accessible.

¹ Ardelt, Where can Wisdom Be Found? A Reply to the commentaries by Baltes and Kunsmann, Sternberg, and Achenbaum 2004

The little plants that I pick up are another layer of accessibility for the viewer and are the visual starting points that I use to translate my moment of reflection into a piece of artwork, simulating a similar experience in the viewer that has the potential to cross over the threshold of conceptualized theory to this re-transformed wisdom that Ardelt discusses. The little plants as this added layer of accessibility do not always have a direct connection to the phrase with which they are associated.

Although there is not always an immediate connection between the procured foliage and my associated insight, there are often multiple layers of insight that are revealed through further reflection and research. In Figures 5.1 and 5.2, the phrase invested into the shadow of a destitute blade of grass describes the choice to view things as beautiful. The stem, stripped of seeds and robbed from its field, is bland. However, the phrase describes beauty to be in the eye of the beholder, rather than in the object beheld. In this way, the phrase used, and the bit of plant used to sustain a relationship beyond their proximity.

Although some phrase-foliage pairs have a direct connection like in the example above, some reveal a coincidental connection that I learn after I finish the composition. For example, Figure 5.3 and 5.4 depicts a few leaves and a nutlet cluster from a linden tree. I researched the linden tree only after I had made this image. In my research, I found that linden trees typically live for a few hundred years, but the Westonbirt Arboretum in South West England, Gloucestershire,

houses a linden tree that has an estimated age of 2,000 years old¹. The context of a lifespan much larger than our own adds to the weightiness of the idea expressed in the text: one fear-driven moment can affect a person for an entire lifespan.

Illusionary Objects

The dead foliage is depicted with panned, fine detail, visually describing a complex form. As I mentioned before, I bring the dead foliage and the phrases into the same realm so that the allegory can be more fully realized. I record shadows from the foliage and the details and textures along the surfaces, and I collapse the three-dimensional object onto a flat surface. Although this is a seemingly preliminary observation for art, it is still poignant to this work. Objects have shape, texture, and form, but images are mainly illusionary, flat icons of the real object, as a signifier with a signified.

The text on the other side of the scale is merely a series of symbols that call these signified objects to mind². Through originally only attaching the words to the side of a plant or letting them float away off the page, I eventually began to add imagined shadows to the words so that they would have the same visual illusionistic quality as the foliage.

The plants leave their original objective state and are made subject to becoming an illusion, and the text is made to fill the role of the illusionary object as well as a symbol to facilitate the analogy.

¹ Honeyman UK n.d.

² de Saussure 1893; Chandler 2006; Hausser 2001

Hints of Color

Although there are a few select pieces with hints of color, most of the work is black and white, pen and ink. In addition to melding the objects with the text, the less than full-color depictions have to do with the slightly seasonal nature within my work.

In the spring, color and vibrancy are rampant, raising happy leaves and petals to greet the sunshine. However, in the winter, the linework and fine detail in the plant life around us are more readily what catches one's interest. The line quality and stark contrast lend themselves to being more unified with the text, reminiscent of the single blade of grass that pierces through the snow in the winter. It is often in the winter when we can see the structure of a bush or the parts of a plant that stick around once the warmth and color are long gone. It is also the structures and insights into a plant that show themselves in winter that are harder to see through the garnishing of spring.

Through my study of wisdom in the Bible, and my journey as an artist, this thesis body of work has become an accurate representation of where I am now, in both my understanding of wisdom and art as a medium for communication. I use my creative process and visual language to mediate my understanding of scripture and life. Although there are many areas of study that I would like to explore and refine, my understanding of wisdom and plants with their respective underlying structures, I will continue to capture my interest. I know that I will continue, through my artwork, to develop ways to communicate how poignant and delightful they both are.



Figure 5.1 “we can always see beauty we can always choose beauty in the way that we see.”

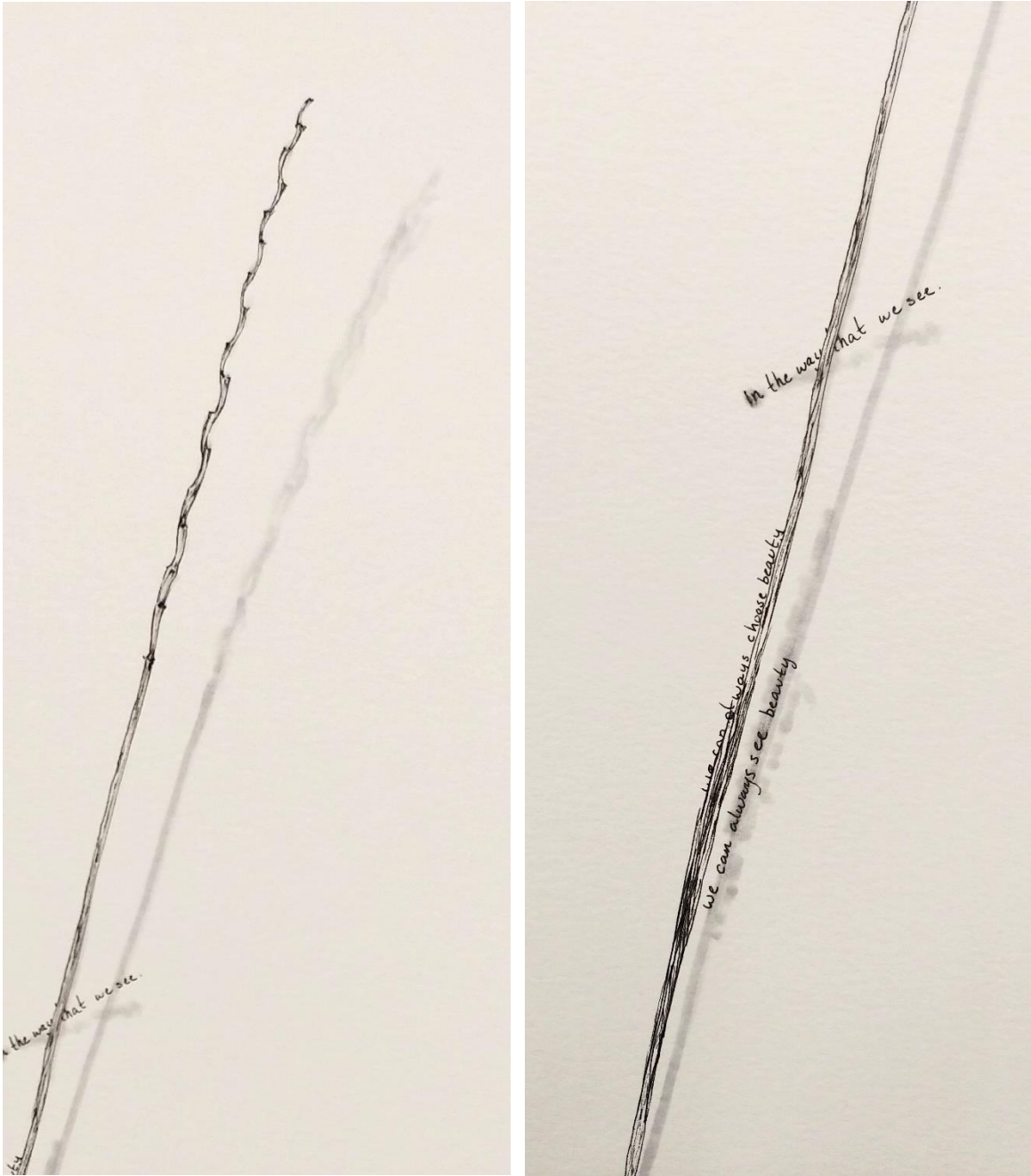


Figure 5.2 Details “we can always...”



Figure 5.3 "a moment of fear can breed hurt that lasts a lifetime"



Figure 5.4 Details "a moment of..."

Artwork within this Body of Work



Figure 5.5 “when I am old & shriveled I hope my spirit grows more radiant. my hands grow more kind as they gain callouses, my voice more sweet as it becomes raspy, I say “teehee” to those smile wrinkles. Becoming a bearer of light.”

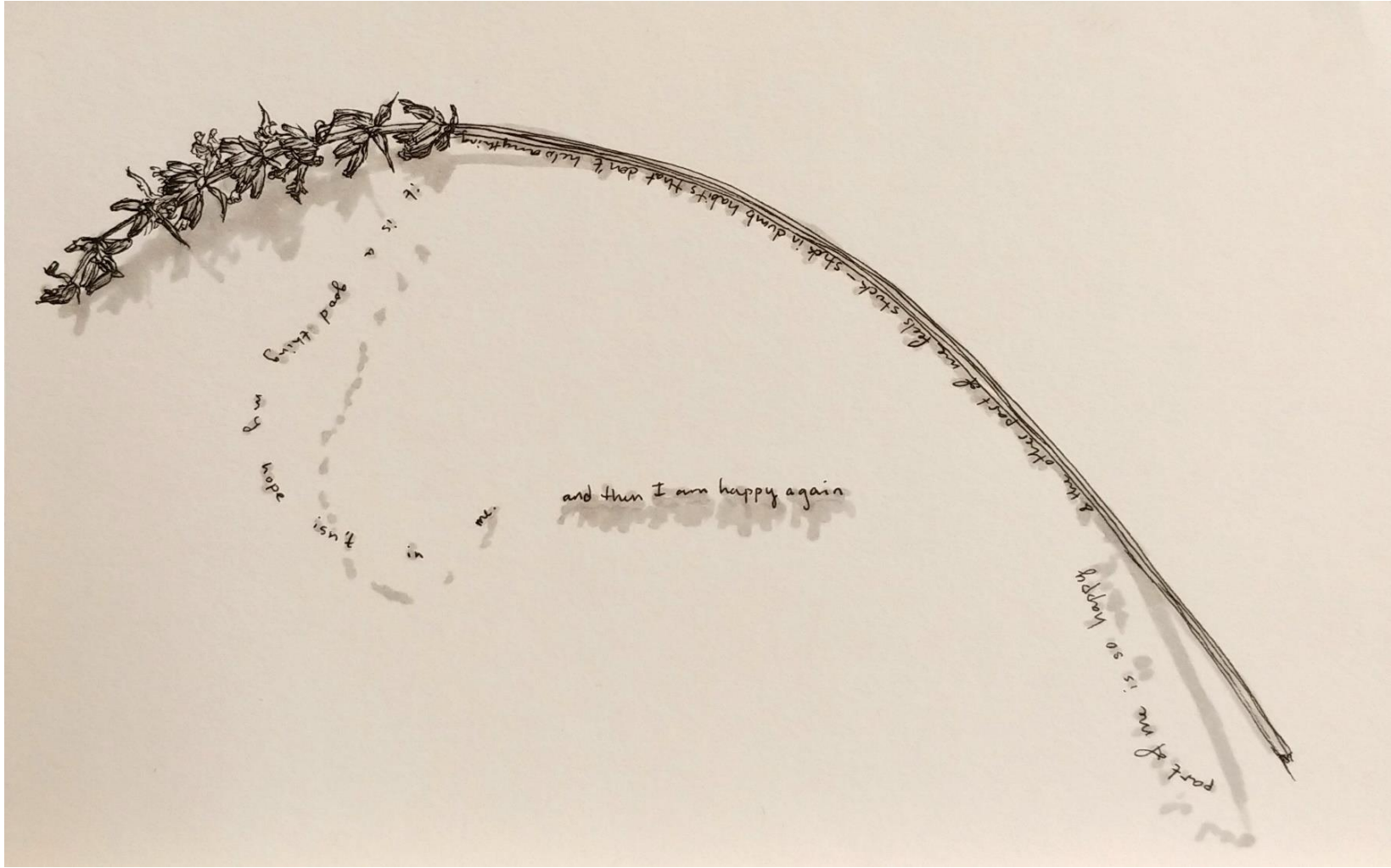


Figure 5.6 “part of me is so happy & the other part of me feels stuck—stuck in dumb habits that don’t help anything it is a good thing my hope isn’t in me and them I am happy again”



Figure 5.7 “driven by fear when it is blind but knowledge won’t act without it; faith”



Figure 5.8 Details "...faith"



Figure 5.9 “will your care for them die as soon as you realize your idea of them is wrong?”

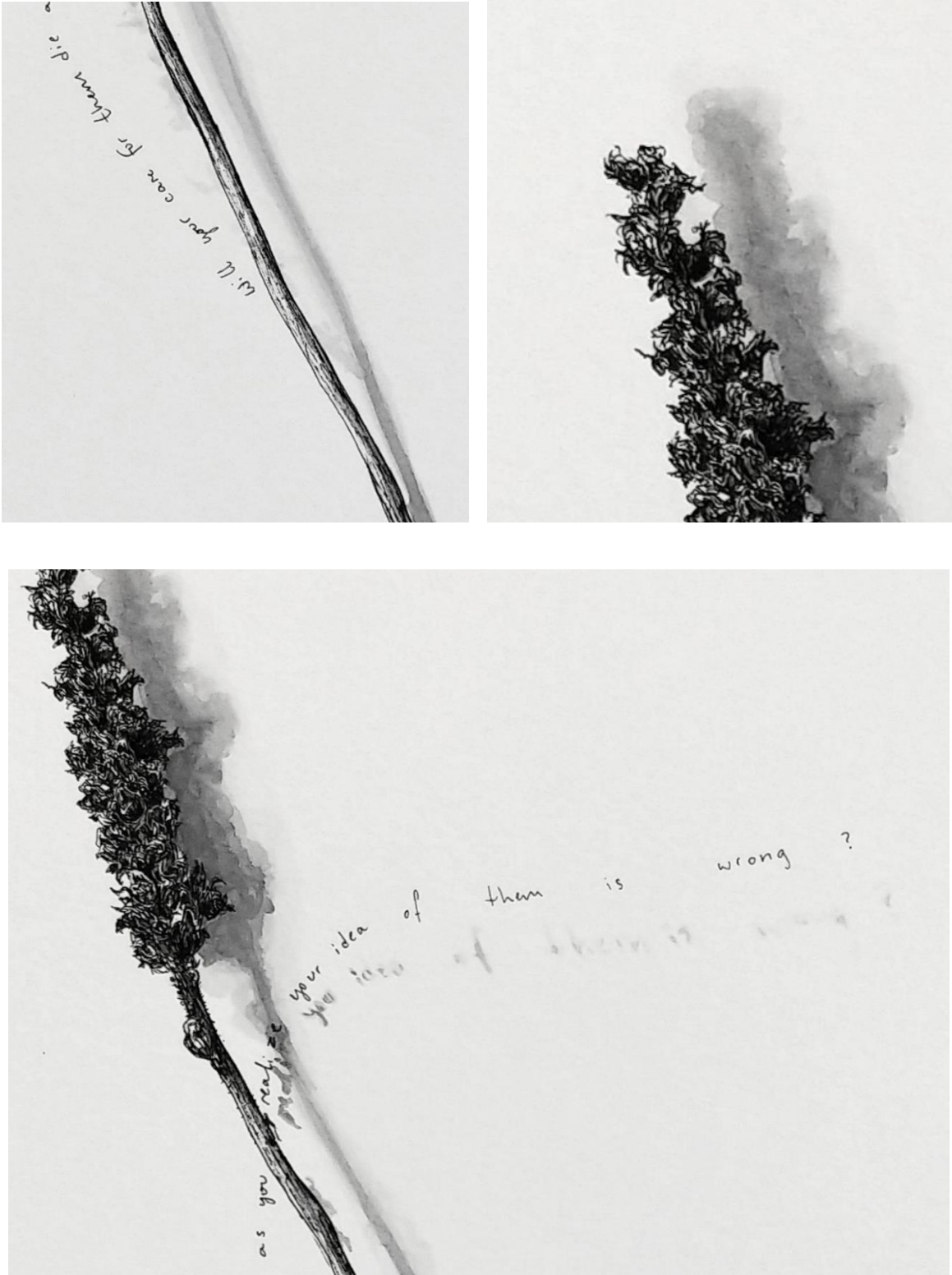


Figure 5.10 Details "will your care..."



Figure 5.11 "if your idea of who someone is, isn't quite right, does your love for them still count?"



Figure 5.12 Details "if your idea..."

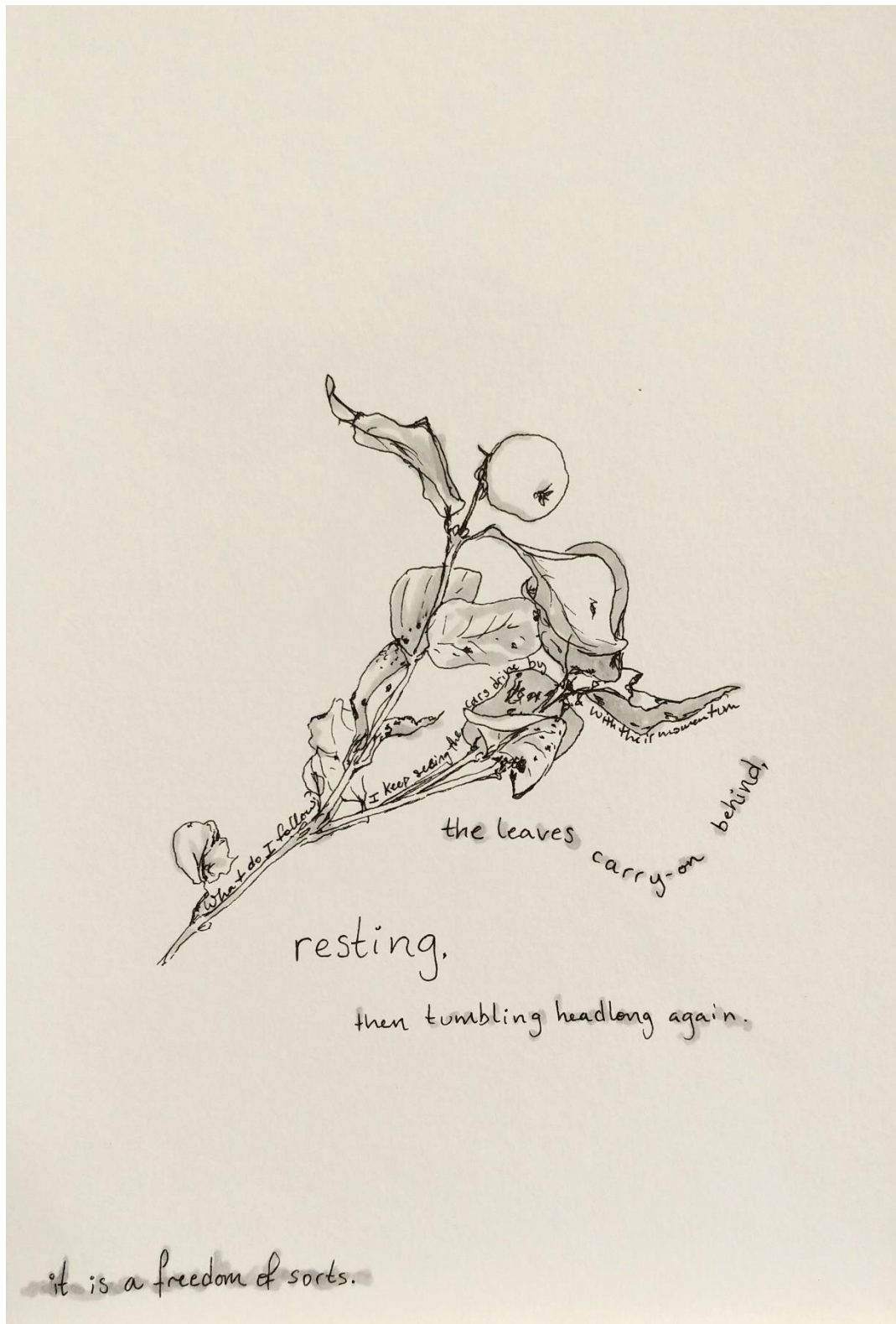


Figure 5.13 “What do I follow? I keep seeing the cars drive by & with their momentum the leaves carry-on behind, resting, then tumbling headlong again. it is a freedom of sorts.”



Figure 5.14 "loyal kindness can heal deep wounds"



Figure 5.15 Details "loyal kindness..."



Figure 5.16 “like having a strong tail wind biking up-hill, when someone believes in you it makes for an easier climb. ‘I think you are on the verge of something—something big.’”



Figure 5.18 Details “like having a...”



Figure 5.19 “removing defense from your own mouth often places it more firmly in others.”



Figure 5.20 Details “removing defense...”



Figure 5.21 “one acts lovingly but denies the care in their thoughts, another follows in action but with emotion to match. Why do we care? When do we stop caring?”

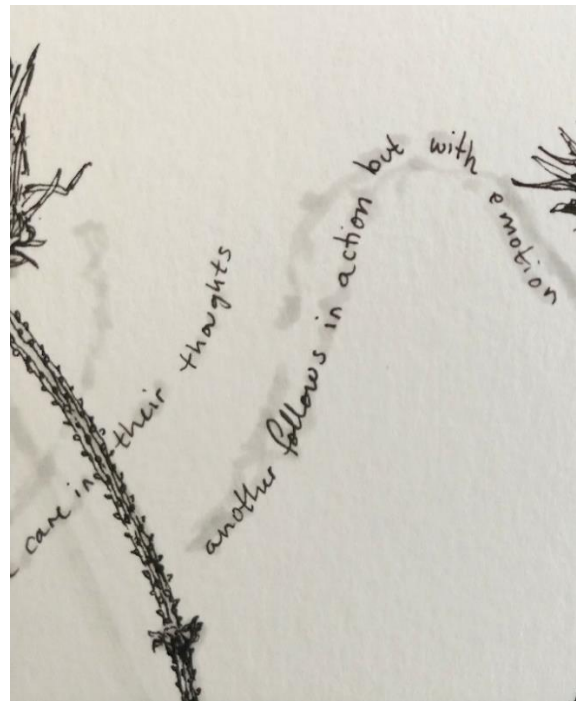
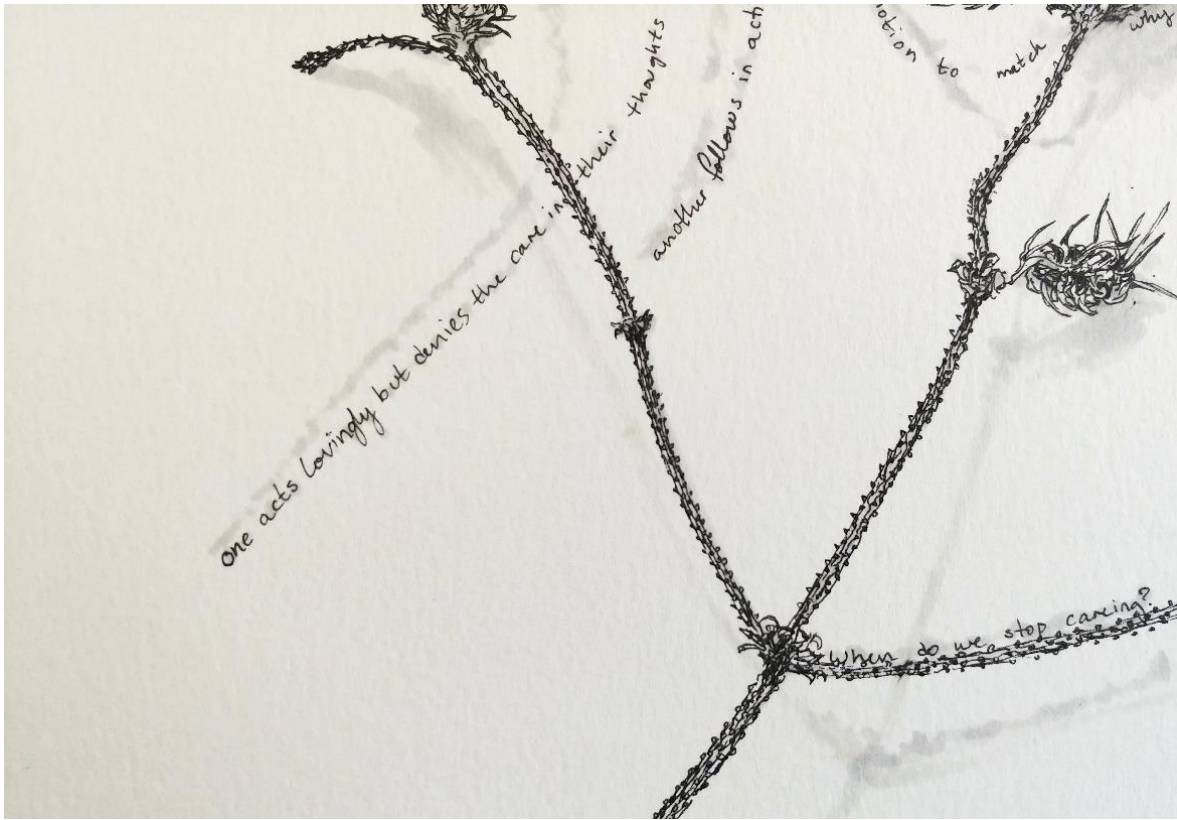


Figure 5.23 Details "one acts..."



Figure 5.24 “hurt & healing knits a stronger bond than just affection so why is our instinct to flee or hold it inside when we are wounded? Thank you Kelly Clarkson for the muscle building incentives.”



Figure 5.25 "leading can be hard. Delegation can be harder. But leading alone will never last."

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Bond, E. J. 1975. "The Essential Nature of Art." *North American Philosophical Publications*, April: 177-183.

Bond outlines frequent pitfalls that philosophers fall into when seeking to define art. Among which are: focusing on one media or realm of art to the extent of the theory not being relevant or cognitive when applied to others and creating a definition that seeks to attribute value as well categorizing low or bad art as non-art. Bond cites Weitz theory as falling into the later malady of art theory, he also cites Maurice Mandelbaum as deftly avoiding attributing value, but her theory falls into labeling only that which results in an "artifact" negating forms of art such as spontaneous dance as no work of art at all.

Much like the practice of botanical drawing, close observation for realistic rendering, the phrases that I use are a result of looking at relationships in a similar fashion to the way the patterns of a pinecone are drawn and discovered, then, understood, after a fashion.

Coe, Stella. 1966. "The Art of Japanese Flower Arrangement." In *The Art of Japanese Flower Arrangement*, by Stella Coe, 23,52. New York: The John Day Company.

Coe briefly explains the history of Japanese flower arranging practices beginning with the Buddhist monk who started these arrangements as a

representation of the universe. This form of plant arrangement was called Rikka. However, the styles evolved from their original towering heights of twelve to fifteen feet high to accommodate smaller scale arrangements as well. These arrangements found their way into the Imperial Court and soon afterward into the common man's home. In this book, Coe describes the main visual components, Shin, Soe, and Hikae, that respectively stand for heaven, man, and earth, though simplified, still emulate the initial monk's intention to describe the universe visually. Japanese flower arrangement, unlike western flower arranging styles, has an emphasis on-line, nature, and shape rather than color, cultivation, and mass.

My work develops a similar visual and universal awareness by implementing space and line, unlike the western sensibilities described as well as connecting the intention toward a representation of the universe as a whole.

Day, Lewis F. 1910. *Nature and Ornament*. New York: Charles Scribners Sons.

Day endeavors through this book to source the beauty and design of ornamentation in various forms to nature and the principles found within it. In his chapter ten 'Nature Study,' he makes a distinction between the furiously cultivated plants within gardens at that time and the freedom observed within natural growth. He contrasts the wild briar rose with the gardeners rose, declaring that the cultivated rose defies ornamental treatment whereas the briar rose excites such ornamentation.

Day comments on cultivations vs. inspirational natural growth. In my artwork, I endeavor to exhibit this natural inspiration in my treatment of botanical forms.

Folsom, Jim. 2016. "The Botanical Artist." *The Nature of Botanical Art* 22: 22-23.

Accessed January 14, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/48502724.

Jim Folsom discusses botanical artists and how their practice necessitates focused engagement in order to be a realistic portrayal. The practice of plant observation develops an understanding of their infrastructure in an intuitive fashion superior to words. He then goes on to describe a generalized nature of plants, following a genetic set of rules to grow by each specific and definite but varying depending on the environment. Folsom then goes on to describe the connection between primary growth and leaf production.

Folsom describes how drawing botanicals from nature “forces observation and engagement” and that pivotal pieces easily become understood to the observing artist. The detail apparent in my drawings is a result of this type of close observation. Similar to the relationship between nature and artist, through the visible stroke of my pen, I want to create a similar relationship between my artwork and the viewer—requiring a similar close observation.

Mathers, Dale. 2009. *Self and No-Self: Continuing the Dialogue Between Buddhism and Psychotherapy*. Edited by Melvin E. Miller and Osamu Ando. New York, NY: Routledge.

Mathers introduces his book by describing the goal of psychotherapy to bolster the self in western culture and how that is completely at odds with the goal of “no-self” in Buddhism. This point is raised because of western psychotherapists' use of Zen Buddhism practices. Mathers points out that the conflicting goals of western psychologists and Zen Buddhism will not allow for both to function simultaneously.

Mindfulness is generally taken to mean focusing on the present as it occurs. This use of mindfulness is not in itself contrary to the biblical viewpoint but nor is it that of Buddhism, which is to empty one “self” in favor of a “no-self” state. The Bible teaches that, although we should remove the “old self” or sinful state, this intended removal is referring to a pattern of living¹, not the removal of a person’s unique qualities—which is what Buddhism describes. The Bible is against leaving individuals emptied and warns of repercussions². Instead, it urges the reader to put on the new self and be transformed by the renewal of the mind³. Readers are by no means directed towards anonymity in light of being absorbed into the whole⁴, rather each individual plays a unique and necessary part in a harmonious body called

¹ ESV, Eph 4:22-24

² ESV, Mt 12:43-45

³ ESV, Rom 12:2

⁴ Macmillan 2003

the church¹. In the Bible, the point of mindfulness is to shift one's focus off of oneself onto Jesus Christ, but the point of mindfulness in Buddhism is to remove self completely. Therefore, mindfulness, as focusing on the present, regardless of its Buddhist connection in the modern context, is not discouraged in the Bible².

Schaeffer, Edith R. 1974. *The Hidden Art of Homemaking*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

Schaeffer writes from a perspective based out of the Bible about both the need and purpose behind our innate desire to create. She discusses numerous areas central to homemaking; food, decoration, artsy art, environment, clothing, creative restoration, reading aloud, writing, flower arrangement, gardening to name the broader topics. In the first two chapters, Schaeffer delves into how, because we are created in the image of the Creator, we are creative. This creativity is, regardless of the task, the pleasure with which we work, and the joyful response through our individual personality. This is what creativity is marked by. This creativity, a joyful response to the work we set out to do, is what produces art, however eloquent or humble it might be.

Much like Schaeffer describes the reason and basis for art, my artwork is a joyful response to the task or work I have set before me. Although this task

¹ ESV, 1Cor 12:12-27; Rom 12:4-8; Col 2:19

² ESV, Col 3:2; Eph 5:15-16; Prv 19:8; Phil 2:1-5; Mtt 22:37; Focus on the Family 2019

is dictated by school rather than homemaking (communicating a specific concept), it is heavily influenced by my understanding of and my view of myself in relation to God, just as Schaeffer outlines.

Todd, Sara. 2019. "What Mary Oliver can Teach us About Handling Criticism with Grace." *Quartz*. January 20. Accessed May 1, 2020.

<https://qz.com/quartz/1528207/what-poet-mary-oliver-can-teach-us-about-dealing-with-criticism/>.

This concept is found in the work of nature poet, Mary Oliver. Her work is described in an article by Sara Todd. Todd expounds on the relationship of the reader to nature through Oliver's experience. Oliver uses "I" not as a stand-in for her own place in her work. Instead, she uses it as a catalyst for the viewer to enter the work. Her goal is not merely to define her experiences, but to reveal them as events that could occur to anyone. The poems as she writes them are created as a result of her experience but are windows for the reader to experiences those vary events¹

Like Oliver, I want the viewer to feel as if they could have easily gone for a short walk and found a plant scrap similar to the pieces illustrated in my work. In the same way, I want my work to be a window for the viewer to experience the plant and phrase, not a display of my life or ego as my own

¹ Todd 2019

but that they might be transported through their own experience of the work.

Tschumi, Christian A. 2006. "Between Tradition and Modernity: The "Karesansui" Gardens of Mirei Shigemori." *Landscape Journal* (25(1)): 108-125. Accessed 01 20, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/43323735.

Tschumi, much as the title implies, relates the blend of tradition and modernity that Shigemori brings about in his garden, refusing strict tradition as well as a perfect adherence to modernity, Shigemori blends the two, playing on the close link of each concept to the other. "Once people learn a style they go to hell," Shigemori had been heard to say. His views on authority were dismissive, and he was drawn to the Avant-Garde of the era. Individualism and creative originality were core to his life work and can be seen in his writings about flower arraignment; one must take nature and convert it into art, the materials may be of nature, but the life you give it from arranging it is not real life, it has become abstracted and your own. Similar to Shigenori, I believe the traditions and past are worth staying connected to, but strict adherence to tradition is maddeningly devoid of creativity. Also similar to Shigemori, I think newness and creativity are helpful in the present but not to the extent of knowing the past only to represent its exact opposite.

Appendix of Plants and Their Corresponding Artworks

*Crab Apple (Malus Spp. Family Rosacera)*¹

- Figure 5.5 “when I am old & shriveled, I hope my spirit grows more radiant. my hands grow more kind as they gain callouses, my voice more sweet as it becomes raspy, I say “teehee” to those smile wrinkles. Becoming a bearer of light.”
 - Native to North America and Asia
 - Small deciduous tree with white, pink or purplish flower
 - Fruits are small apples (pomes) that decorate the tree through fall and winter.
 - Usually grown as decorative trees for flowers and decorative fruit.
 - Sometimes small fruits are used in Jellies, preserves, and cider.
 - Thrive in rich, moist, slightly acidic soil.

*Dandelion, Red Seeded (Taraxacum Erythrospermum)*²

- Figure 5.24 “hurt & healing knits a stronger bond than just affection so why is our instinct to flee or hold it inside when we are wounded? Thank you Kelly Clarkson for the muscle building incentives.”
 - Dandelion: *Taraxacum Offinale*: Family *Compositae*
 - Flourishes on nitrogen-rich soil up to 6500 ft. and is naturalized all over the temperate regions of the world.

¹ The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica 2015; Treehelp.com n.d.

² Stephenson 2020; McVicar 1994

- The Russian variety was used to cultivate in World War II for the latex in the roots, which was used as a source for rubber.
- Both the root and the leaves are very nutritious and can be eaten in salads.
- Dandelion leaves have a diuretic property but since it has a high potassium content it does not
- and are high in vitamins A, B, C, and D.
- The latex in the stalks and leaves can be used to remove warts and corns if applied to them daily.
- Excellent food for nibbling pets: Rabbits, guinea pigs and gerbils.

Daylily (Hemerocallis Supp. Family Asphodelaceae)¹

- Figure 1.3 “If you walk away, words still bite at your heels”
- Figure 1.4 Details “If you...”
 - About 15 species many hybrids few strait species left
 - Flowers usually funnel or bell-shaped with one or two sets of petals, polypetalous, spider or unusual.
 - Blossoms last for only a day
 - Name comes from Greek *hermera-kallos* meaning *day-beauty* describing the duration of the flower as lasting only one day.
 - Native to Asia and Europe
 - Flowers in hot colors: red, orange, yellow, pink but hybrids offer colors far beyond this scope.
 - Salt and drought tolerant
 - Extremely adaptable perennials and easy to grow.
 - Grow in the sun or partial shade
 - Bloom time May to June

¹ Kilpatrick n.d.; Missouri Botanical Garden n.d.

- Nocturnal daylilies:
 - opens petals at dusk, stays open during night and part of next day.
 - An extended bloom—longer than typical 16 hours up to two days.
 - Pale yellow spidery flower with green throat.
- Prolific buds keep flowering—long blooming period
- Daylilies are susceptible to different fungal infections. These affect the leaves and entire plant. By removing dead leaves and ensuring good drainage infection can be prevented
- Insects can also be combatted through removal of weeds and other plant litter.
- Attracts butterflies
- Low maintenance
- If divided every 2-4 years in fall or spring to ensure health and blooms

Ferns (Polypodiopsida)¹

- Figure 5.16 “like having a strong tail wind biking up-hill, when someone believes in you it makes for an easier climb. “I think you are on the verge of something—something big.””
- Figure 5.17 Details “like having...”
 - Ferns have some of the oldest plant fossils found.
 - Second-most diverse group of vascular plants with around 10,500 species, out numbered by flowering plants
 - Usually require heavily shaded to partially shaded areas but some varieties prefer full sun.
 - Fern leaves, fronds, are comprised on a stalk and blades that comprise the main part of the frond.

¹ Pinsom n.d.; Morse n.d.

- Instead of flowers or seeds ferns have sporangia. These are the little capsules that produce the spores. Often on the underside of the frond.
 - Each sporangia utilizes the breaking of water tension to catapult spores into the surrounding area once they have fully developed. This is all done on a microscopic level.
- Ferns spread quickly through spores and creeping rhizomes.
- Most ferns grow best in rich moist soil.
- Do not require pruning or staking
- Enjoy moist environments

Honey Locust Tree (Gleditsia Triacanthos family Fabaceae)¹

- Figure 5.7 “driven by fear when it is blind but knowledge won’t act without it; faith”
- Figure 5.8 Details “...faith”
 - Also called the Sweet Bean
 - Rapid growth rate, 100-year lifetime average
 - Hardy, grows well in different soils, survives with only moderate irrigation, good in full sun
 - Fragrant yellow green flowers, grow in clusters
 - Male and female flowers grow on different trees but sometimes flowers with both male and female parts flower on one tree.
 - Fruits of honey locust grow in pods, length of pod 7-16 inches

Honeysuckle “Kinsley’s Ghost” (Lonicera Reticulata family Caprifoliaceae)²

- Figure 5.19 “removing defense from your own mouth often places it more firmly in others.”
- Figure 5.20 Details “removing defense...”

¹ Gardenerdy n.d.

² Monrovia n.d.;

- Common name comes from sucking the sweet nectar from the flowers
- Traditionally it was thought that brought into the house a wedding would follow and when flowers were placed in a girl's bedroom she would dream of love
- Also called “Woodbine” due to its climbing up and binding trees and hedges.
- It is thought that “An infusion of the heavy perfumed flowers can be taken as a substitute for tea”
- Useful for treating coughs and asthma, and is good for skin infections in lotion form.
- Berries are Poisonous
- Kingsley’s Ghost variety was a family heirloom propagated in the late 1800’s and brought to public attention in the early 2000’s. It is noted for its unusual silver green disks (bracts) that it has.

*Heuchera (Heuchera Ovalifolia family Saxifragaceae)*¹

- Figure 5.9 “will your care for them die as soon as you realize your idea of them is wrong?”
- Figure 5.10 Details “will your care...”
- Figure 5.11 “if your idea of who someone is, isn’t quite right, does your love for them still count?” and
- Figure 5.12 Details “if your idea...”
 - Small bell-like flowers on tall stems
 - Attracts hummingbirds
 - Leaves are evergreen and come in a variety of colors
 - Native to North America

¹ Iannotti 2019

- Divide every three to five years so that the centers do not die out
- Prefers partial to full sun depending on the heat of the climate
- Leaf color can wash out, or scorch if in full sun
- Prone to fungi in damp soil

*Lavender (Lavandula, family Labiatae)*¹

- Figure 5.6 “part of me is so happy & the other part of me feels stuck—stuck in dumb habits that don’t help anything it is a good thing my hope isn’t in me and then I am happy again”
 - Native of the Mediterranean region, Canary Isles and India
 - Thrives in any poor or moderately fertile soil in sun.
 - Perennial, bushy, strong scented plant that remains evergreen year-round in many regions.
 - Romans used lavender in bath water hence the name since “lava” is the verb to wash in Latin.
 - It was used as a strewing herb to mask smells and repel insects and carried in nosegays in the hope of warding off the plague
 - Large fields have been grown in France since the 17th century
 - Usually grown from cuttings since the seeds are not likely to grow the original type they came from.
 - Has antibacterial properties for use on cuts, burns, and stings
 - Sachets can be used for aroma as well as repelling moths
 - The flowers rubbed on skin will keep flies away

¹ McVicar 1994; Firman 2019

- Use the aroma for anxiety and stress relief, reduction in menstrual pain, to improve mood and increase relaxation and use the oil as ointment for burns and itchiness.

Lilac bush (Syringa, family Oleaceae)¹

- Figure 1.7 “a best effort rejected can fill one with doubt, but the same received well proves a double reward.”
- Figure 1.8 Details “a best effort...”
 - Native to the Eastern Europe and Asia but widespread and naturalized in the US
 - Many varieties but they all bloom in spring and powerful and delightful scent.
 - Grow in rich soil with a pH near 7
 - Need at least 6 hours of sun and will not bloom if the roots are too wet
 - Grow to about 20 ft and send out suckers
 - Prune right after blooming since it blooms on old wood.

Linden Tree²

- Figure 3.1 silence is so sweet when it is the silence of rest; a silence of friends comforted by one another’s company.
- Figure 5.3 “a moment of fear can bread hurt that lasts a lifetime”
- Figure 5.4 Details “a moment...”
 - Of 30 species of Linden only one native Linden tree to U.S.

¹ The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica 2009

² Just Fun Facts 2017; Lovejoy n.d.

- Lifespan couple hundred years, some Linden trees estimated to be over 2,000 years old.
- Tea can be brewed from tree's flower (pleasing taste) and tinctures
- Dried flowers are mildly sweet and sticky because of the aromatic volatile oil and flavonoids (which act as antioxidants) in the flowers
- Flowers, leaves, wood, and charcoal (from the wood) are used for medicinal purposes
 - Flowers used in herbalism (for colds, cough, fever, infections, inflammation, high blood pressure, headache specifically migraine, and as diuretic because it increases urine production, antispasmodic because it reduces smooth muscle spasm along the digestive tract, and sedative, may be hepatoprotective a.k.a. ability to prevent damage to the liver)
 - Wood: known in the trade as basswood, white and soft, fine grain, not good in humidity. Used to fabricate frameworks for furniture, picture frames, hoofs, printing boards, pencils, matches, and piano keys, Good for building and intricate carving. Good acoustic properties, popular for electric guitar and bass bodies as well as wind instruments like recorders. Occasionally used for drum shells for percussion for sound and aesthetics. Often used by Viking and Germanic tribes for making shields. The bark can be used for ropes, mats and course fabrics
- National tree of the Czech Rep, Slovakia, and Slovenia.
- Reach 80ft when full grown (65-130ft)
- The spread is often similar to height
- Young tree has slightly hairy leaves
- Leaves in late spring followed by clusters (2-10) of fragrant cream yellow flowers
- Flowers are hermaphroditic having flowers with male and female parts pollinated by insects.
- Important honey plant for bees

- Fruit appears in late summer as pear sized nutlets each with a leaflike wing
- Can take hard freezes to harsh drought during summer
- Able to grow in most soil types best in loose rich soil though
- Leaves have leaf scald when conditions are severely during hot, windy, dry weather.
- Not usually bothered by pests, except once tree is compromised by leaf scald, then aphids, in which case the leaves will appear curled with insects and clear gelatinous liquid.
- Large spreading root system can affect structures nearby
- Sometimes roots will produce sprouts

Oak Tree (Quercus family Fagaceae)¹

- Figure 3.2 “cheer up, it isn’t tomorrow yet” Achorn: fruit
- Figure 5.25 “leading can be hard. Delegation can be harder. But leading alone will never last.” Decaying leaves
 - Part of the beech tree family: quercus or lithocarpus
 - Over 400 species
 - Slow growth but hardy, live for a long time. up to 200 years or more (Louisiana estimated oak 1200yrs)
 - Often unnoticed yellowish-green flowers.
 - Oak trees each have both male and female flowers but need other oaks to pollinate. Male oak flowers (catkins) looks like string of beads. Female flowers hard to find, similar to leaf buds often need help of magnifying glass to locate.
 - Within two weeks of flowering male flower produces pollen. Pollen only lasts 3-4 days.
 - Female flower has 6 different ovules with eggs, only one will become fertilized to then become an acorn.

¹ Teague 2017

- Acorns not consumable for humans and most animals because of tannin in the seed
- Acorns fall before leaves in fall and leaves help insulate and protect
- Only start producing fruit (acorns) after 20-50 years of growth but when they do it is in the thousands.
- Peak acorn production between 50-80 years in a age.
- Animals specifically provide dispersal of the seeds from the tree, especially since seeds are so heavy.
- Acorns don't easily germinate 1 out of 10,000 becomes a tree
- Full grown oaks absorb 50 gallons of water or more per day
- Very resilient, not prone to infection or infestations except mold dubbed Sudden Oak Death, kills tree in a few days

Conifer (family Conifera)¹

- Figure 5.21 “one acts lovingly but denies the care in their thoughts, another follows in action but with emotion to match. Why do we care? When do we stop caring?”
- Figure 5.22 Details “one acts...”
 - Some in this family are the pines, larches, spruces, hemlocks, firs and cedars
 - Called conifers because they produce seeds within a cone and have needles instead of leaves
 - Many evergreen trees can live for over 1000 years
 - The oldest living trees in the world are conifers—there are bristlecone pines in California that are believed to be 5000 years old
 - Keep their foliage year-round (with some exceptions like the larches) hence the name evergreen.
 - Most conifers shed needles slowly over a period of 2-3 years with new needles growing quickly.

¹ Sharpe 2017; Nix 2019

- Grow across the northern Hemisphere in Europe, North America and Asia
- Are considered softwood
- Are of economic importance in lumber and paper production
- Some conifers like the lodgepole pine require a forest fire to open the cones and release the seeds
- Very popular in the landscaping since they have such variety

*Ribwort Plantain (Plantago Lanceolata family Plantaginaceae)*¹

- Figure 3.5 “go home, but, I don’t know where that is.” Stem and head after flowering.
 - Common weed on cultivated or disturbed ground
 - Native to Eurasia
 - Contains iridoid glycosides that make it inedible to some herbivores.
 - The buckeye butterfly’s (*Junonia Coenia*) larvae eat the plant making it undesirable for predators
 - Many different insects lay their eggs on the plant’s leaves in order that the larvae can use the plant as a food source
 - Is often infected by powdery mildews that extract nutrients from the living tissue, the plant can recover depending on the plant’s phenotype
 - The Leaves are used as a cough medicine in herbal teas.
 - Pollen commonly dispersed on the wind, as well as by bees.
 - Reproduces sexually unlike many other species of *Plantago* not asexually
 - Young leaves can be eaten raw or cooked, tedious but best if fibrous strands are removed
 - Seed can be eaten cooked, ground into powder and added to flours when cooking.

¹ Wild Edibles Database 2013

- Used as antibacterial, antidote, astringent, demulcent, expectorant, haemostatic, laxative, ophthalmic, poultice
- Used in UK and Ireland for simple school children games. “Cannonballs” and “The one o’clock gun” variations pop the head off the stem to see how far it could go. “Bishops” played by knocking off the head of a friend’s stalk with one’s own through sward-fighting movements.
- A few of its medicinal uses include:
 - slows bleeding and encouraging tissue repair
 - Antibacterial properties (mucilage, tannin and silic acid)
 - Skin inflammation treatment
 - Root is a remedy for rattlesnake bite

Snowberry (Symphoricarpos family Caprifoliaceae)¹

- Figure 5.13 “What do I follow? I keep seeing the cars drive by & with their momentum the leaves carry-on behind, resting, then tumbling headlong again. it is a freedom of sorts.”
 - Native to North America (and one species in central China)
 - Shrub or small tree
 - A part of the Honeysuckle family
 - Bell shaped pinkish or white flowers and 2 seeded white berries (some species do not have white berries)
 - Was used to treat various ailments by some native American tribes. A few of the uses are:
 - Eaten to settle the stomach after too much fatty food
 - Infusion of fruit used as eyewash for sore eyes
 - Berries rubbed into skin as burn, rash and sores, treatment

Viburnum (Viburnum Prunifolium family Adoxaceae)²

¹ Favorite and Moore 2008; Natural Medicinal Herbs n.d.

² Iannotti 2020

- Figure 1.2 “O, to be loved while being ugly—shown grace while being a jerk. A kind answer turns away wrath”
- Figure 5.14 “loyal kindness can heal deep wounds”
- Figure 5.15 Details “loyal kindness...”
 - Many different varieties some native to the USA and some from Asia
 - Deciduous shrub with usually white flowers and berries
 - Rich well drained soil that is slightly acidic
 - Requires full sun to partial shade
 - Foliage comes in many shapes
 - Flowers are either flat clusters of florets, flat umbels outlined with larger flowers resembling lace-cap hydrangeas, and dome-shaped, snowball-like clusters.
 - Not self-pollinating and so require another variety to cross pollinate in order to produce fruit
 - Birds love the berries

Images with Unknown Plants

- Figure 1.1 “To voice something is a vulnerable thing”
- Figure 1.5 “Just because you think something doesn’t mean it defines you, what you dwell on will shape you”
- Figure 1.6 Details “Just because...”
- Figure 3.3 “Loving well requires sacrifice”
- Figure 3.4 Details “Loving well...”
- Figure 5.1 “we can always see beauty we can always choose beauty in the way that we see.”
- Figure 5.2 Details “we can always...”